

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1040.—VOL. XL.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING APRIL 7, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[THE DOOR OF THE CARRIAGE WAS FLUNG OPEN AS RUBY SAT DOWN, AND SOMEONE ENTERED HURRIEDLY AND SANK DOWN ON THE OPPOSITE SEAT.]

THE LOST STAR.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE telegram arrived in time to save Ruby from despair, although, through some mistake at Alverley Station, it did not reach Chester till the Monday morning. All Sunday she kept to her room—a voluntary prisoner. The sound of the church-bells was wafted to her across the leafless trees, but gnawed by the dreadful tooth of anxiety, they brought no message of peace to her troubled heart. She could scarcely find calmness enough to pray, with this anxiety about Violet weighing like tons of lead on her mind, though she knelt for some time by her bedside with clasped hands and bowed head.

Lady Chester came in, late in the afternoon, looking very nervous, and saying that she was so sorry to hear that Miss St. Heliers was ill.

"Thank you!" said Ruby, perfectly composed, but white as a sheet; "my head aches, and I have a pain in my heart."

"Dear! dear! do you do anything for it? Sal volatile, I believe, is very efficacious in some instances."

"I think the only things required are peace and change of scene."

"They are not always to be had, unfortunately," with an uneasy look out of the window, as if she were afraid to guess what was passing in her governess's mind.

"Change of scene is at all events within my reach, and I mean to try it."

"You mean you would like to spend a day or two with your sister—when—when all this worry is over?"

"I mean!" said Ruby proudly, determined to take the bull by the horns, "that when the Earl has asked me as many questions as he likes—when he is perfectly satisfied that I am neither a liar nor a thief—I shall ask your permission to leave a house where such a slur has been cast upon me!"

The Countess looked aghast.

"But, my dear Miss St. Heliers, who says such dreadful things of you? You have only to tell us the name of the friend who sent you the diamond star, and the reason why you

paid two journeys backwards and forwards to London on the same day, and—and all this shall be forgotten."

"Not by me, if I live to be a hundred!"

"I hope so,"—soothingly. "The children are devoted to you; and in so short a time the influence you have acquired over them is quite extraordinary."

"And where would that influence be?"—her lip curling scornfully—"when they grew to know—as they would know sooner or later—that the person they were so fond of had been accused of theft!"

Lady Chester nearly cried. "They never should know it. And no one accuses you—not even my husband. He wishes you, for your own sake, to cast off this slight shadow which rests upon you."

"Then, for my own sake, I wish he had let me be. I was conscious of no shadow till he brought it by his base insinuations!"

"Lord Chester could never stoop to anything base! You are unjust to him; and yet it is his most earnest wish to be perfectly just to you!"

"Then he is most self-serving. I only

wish my father were alive"—her voice trembling with agitation—"and he would ask him if it were on-tomorrow for a gentleman to doubt a lady's word!"

"He did not wish to doubt it; only you must remember the difficulty of his position when there are two witnesses against you. Ocelle, the station-master, could scarcely have any motive for saying he saw you if such were not the case?"

Ruby winced; and the Countess noticed, with a pang, that her eyes fell, as she remarked, coldly,—

"I believe I am to be subjected to a second examination to-morrow, so perhaps it is useless to discuss it now."

"Perfectly useless!" with a sigh, "if you close your heart against me. I thought perhaps you would like to confide to me what you might not wish to tell to my husband's ears. If I could only tell him that I was satisfied he would be so glad of an excuse to drop it!"

"You are very kind," and the tears came into the earnest eyes. "You will know all some day, and then you will judge me less harshly than you do now—only I shall not be here to know it!"

"But we cannot afford to lose you," and the Countess looked really distressed. "The children will break their hearts!"

"Some day when the stars turn up, and you know that I had nothing to do with the loss, perhaps you will let them see me—not till then!"

"I know it now! Indeed—indeed, I never doubted you!"

Ruby smiled faintly. "I should be glad if you would allow somebody to search my room to-morrow, so that I might not be supposed to carry it away in my boxes; and perhaps you will say good-bye to Mrs. Upton to-morrow. She was always so good to me."

The stars were running down Lady Chester's face.

"But if it is all explained away—why should you go?"

"Because I have an ounce of self-respect left. Because it would choke me to sit down at table with people who had chosen to doubt my honesty!"

The Countess sighed.

"I wish to Heaven that I had never gone to Ripley!"

"Be sure that if it had not happened that day it would another; the burglar probably laid his plans several days before."

"Do you think so? But how could he have got in?"

"Very easily, if there were no one about—either by the window of your own room, or that of the breakfast-room."

"Do you think the man passed through the school-room, and that it was his box of cigarettes you found?"

"It is possible; and the strange man on the icosany be the very one who did it!"

"He seemed to know you!"

"Yes; and I suppose I must expect to have that brought up against me as well!" said Ruby, wearily.

"I was not thinking of that"—hastily—"only I wish you could identify him."

"I wish I could; but my head feels bewildered. Lady Chester—with a piteous look on her worn face; "If the Earl persists in thinking me guilty, what am I to do?"

"But he won't! You will tell him all you can to-morrow to elucidate his doubts. Believe me, nothing could please him better."

"And meanwhile, as a last favour, keep it from the children!"

"I will, most certainly. They think you are ill; and May has been teasing me all day to let her come to you. She sat next me in church, and I felt so worried and miserable—what with all this fuss in the house and the bad news about Alverley—that I could not help a tear stealing down my cheek. The child caught sight of it at once, and printing, to the

with her finger asked if that was for Miss Sellers?"

Ruby turned away—the thought of leaving those two children, with their winning ways, was almost too much for her.

The Countess, seeing that her heart was touched, put her hand kindly on Ruby's shoulder, and whispered, softly: "For her sake, if not for your own, keep nothing back from us to-morrow," and without another word left the room.

The bad news about Alverley! Did she mean that he would really have to lose his arm? He had taken so little care of himself—playing with his health, as with everything else in life, and this was to be the end! Crippled in the flower of his manhood, when the future was full of promise, and the present without a cloud!

Ruby shuddered as she thought of him deprived of all his favourite pleasures—his hunters standing idle in the stables, whilst his brother was flying over gates and bullfinches in the wake of the hounds; his guns left week after week in their rack, whilst partridges and pheasants were shot down by the hands of his friends and neighbours. What would become of him?—cut off from all the healthier relaxations of a man's existence? Would he turn to the gaming-table, as a last resource, and drown the bitterness of his spoiled career in the sliny waters of dissipation? If so, it was well, perhaps, that they should never meet again—the tender plant of friendship could never thrive in such an atmosphere, for a vicious undergrowth of passion would be sure to rise and strangle it ere long.

And yet the remembrance of that friendship was very sweet to her. It had about it the charm of "salutary waters," and involuntarily she raised the handkerchief to her lips, as she laid her aching head on the pillow.

They might talk together as much as they liked, but they would never shake his confidence in her innocence! And it would be something to know that, whatever might happen to her in the future, there was one person left belonging to Chester Chase who would never hear her conduct or character called in question, without lifting up his voice in her defence.

Could she say the same for Harold Jenningsham? She was not sure, in spite of his earnest avowal. He was so frank and straightforward himself that he would not believe in the necessity for concealment; and any suspicion of an secret between herself and his brother would prejudice him against her at once.

What answer would the morrow bring from Violet? Everything in life seemed to depend upon that! If a letter came to say that her sister had spent that Thursday evening, in London—well and good! Then she could look her position in the face with her usual courage, and refute the worst part of the accusation at once. But if not—Heaven preserve her!—for man seemed bent on her ruin!

What answer would the morrow bring from Violet? Everything in life seemed to depend upon that! If a letter came to say that her sister had spent that Thursday evening, in London—well and good! Then she could look her position in the face with her usual courage, and refute the worst part of the accusation at once. But if not—Heaven preserve her!—for man seemed bent on her ruin!

CHAPTER. XXIX.

TELEGRAM from Violet St. Heliers, Chester to Ruby St. Heliers, Chester Chase;—shire.

"It is difficult to remember, but I suppose I went shopping in the morning, and to church in the afternoon."

"Thank Heaven!" murmured Ruby. Her first thought, as usual, was for her sister, the second for herself.

Violet had not been down to the Chase, so she had been saved from a meeting with Captain Marston! And now she was free to maintain the truth of her first statement, whatever the station-master on the school-room-maid might swear to the contrary.

Relieved from her worst anxiety, she looked so much brighter that Mrs. Nicholson was quite surprised, and asked if anything had happened.

"Only that I have had some good news from my sister, she answered, with a smile, and

"Anything that will help yourself? or about think much of it."

"Yes, it will help me greatly!"

Looking out of the window, lost in thought, she was trying to make up her mind that she had a good excuse for breaking her promise to Lord Alverley. Because, if he came, he would probably do her more harm than good; and it was almost impossible for him to come, as he was supposed to be ill in bed. Still, turn it as she would, the promise was binding. It had been made free of all conditions. If she were in trouble, she was to send that ring to him! She was in the extremity of trouble now—ergo—the ring must be sent.

She would not tamper any more with her conscience, so turned to the housekeeper with a slight blush,—

"Dear Mrs. Nicholson, you have been so good to me that I am going to ask you to do me another kindness—it is to have a small packet sent to the post for Lord Alverley."

A look of surprise came over the plump face.

"Don't torment me, and I will tell you all from the beginning. When I took that bottle of medicine to Mrs. Watson, I was obliged to wait a long while in the wood because the poachers were about."

"Blame my fault—were you out there all the while? I wonder you weren't frightened out of your skin!"

"I was very nearly; for a poacher came close to me, and pointed his gun at Lord Alverley, whom I could see in the distance. Fortunately, I caught hold of the muzzle and pressed it down, so he would have been killed. Lord Alverley found this out, and offered to be my good friend for life in consequence."

"To think of your saving his life, and none of us knowing a word about it!"

"No; I begged him not to mention it. So he gave me this ring," touching it once upon her finger—"and made me promise faithfully that if ever I were in trouble I was to send it to him, and he would come to my help."

"And you never said it!" breathlessly. "To think of it! I wonder you weren't frightened out of your skin!"

"But I didn't want him to know. And he's ill now!"

"Never you mind that name; he can write, if that's all, and thank his father and mother. You give it to me."

Ruby took out a sheet of paper, and wrote:

"I thank this much against my will—according to my promise. I am in trouble, but your kindness has helped me, and I earnestly pray you not to come, as you may do yourself irreparable injury. I shall be gone before you can arrive. I know that you will not believe what they say against me; and I shall always remember your friendship and your little sisters' affection, as the only pleasant memories connected with Chester Chase. Good-bye!—we shall not meet again."

She read it over, with the tears in her eyes, placed the ring in it, folded it up, and directed it.

"I have no stamps!" she said, hoarsely. "Never mind!" And the housekeeper hurried out of the room, muttering: "A quarter to eleven already; there's not much time to lose!"

But, although she was in a hurry, her wits were wide awake; and when she had put on her bonnet she took care to tell Lady Chester know that she was going down to Watson's, to ask him to send up some towels to her.

"The last he saw!" she added, "were as poor as I am!"

When she was out of sight from the windows of the Chase, she hurried along as fast as her portly form would allow her. She had more than one motive for haste, as she wanted to catch Jim Watson in good time to send him off by the twelve o'clock train; and her absence from the house on Monday morning was an event of almost unprecedented occurrence.

Jim, a large, leggy boy of sixteen, was digging up his father's garden to get on with Mrs.

Nicholson appeared, very much out of breath, on the other side of the hedge.

"Good-morning, Jem. Father at home?"

"No, mum; not yet. Tain't likely he'll be round long afore dinner."

"Here, Jem, I want to speak to you. You've got over that nasty illness of yours, and can walk a mile or two on a stretch?"

"Ten mile, and never feel a bit the worse for it. I'm as strong as ever I was!"

"Then you wouldn't object to going to town on an errand for an old woman like me?"

"Object! I should be right down glad to go!" and the boy's eyes sparkled.

"Then you must be off by the twelve o'clock train—not a minute later—and this is what you are going for," handing him the packet over the hedge.

"Take this to Lord Alverley's, 63, St. James's-street—that's close upon the Queen's palace—anyone will tell you where to find it. Give it to Mr. Phillips—you know him—and tell him it's something his master left behind him, and he'll be in a dreadful way till he gets it. Mind, you must not lose a moment before you take it to him; but when it is once in his hands, you can go to the Aquarium, if you like, and enjoy yourself. Tell your mother and father that you are going up to town on business for me; and not a word of this to anyone else. Here's half-a-crown for yourself, and this for your fare. He's a good boy, and I'll employ you again." Nodding to him good-naturedly as she slipped the money into his hand, and refusing all invitations to come in and sit down, she hurried home.

As she gained her own room, and laid aside her bonnet, she thought to herself: "That girl Anna had more reason on her side than I ever imagined! They are friends—those two—on the sly; and lovers they are sure to be, before the year is out! Don't tell me that a man could look on a pretty face like that, and not wish to do as much with his lips as his eyes—if only he got the chance."

Ruby employed all the morning in packing her boxes, for nothing could shake her determination to leave the Chase at the earliest opportunity. She calculated that she would probably be released from her unpleasant interview with the Earl, in time for her to catch the 4.55 train; if not, she must go by the quarter-to-six.

Supposing that Lady Chester forgot to order the carriage for her, she would walk to the station, and ask Mrs. Nicholson to see that her luggage was sent after her as soon as convenient. Her head had ached, more or less, ever since her visit on the ice, and subsequent events had not tended to make it better. At times she felt so dazed that she began to fear lest the blow on her temple had affected her reason, which grew into a horrible nightmare, as she tossed about restlessly on her pillow.

She was deadly pale, and dark circles were round her eyes, as in obedience to Mrs. Nicholson's summons, she followed her out of the room.

"My boxes are open, and the keys are on my table. I should like you to look through them, if you have the time, before I lock them up," she said, quietly; as if it were the most natural thing in the world for a lady's boxes to be searched before she left the house.

"Now, don't talk like that, or I shall break down," and the housekeeper turned away, brushing a tear away with the back of her hand.

Once more Ruby went down the broad staircase, and across the marble hall. The place seemed strange to her after her imprisonment in one room, and she shivered with a wretched feeling of loneliness, as she opened the study-door and walked in.

"Oh! if Lord Alverley were only here!" crossed her mind in a moment of weakness; and then she bowed gravely to the Earl and Countess, and took her seat in the chair which was pointed out to her.

"I am sorry to have to trouble you again, Miss St. Heliers," began the Earl, politely; "but I trust that this will be the last occasion

on which I shall have to annoy you with any distressing questions."

Ruby bent her head, but said nothing.

"Are you prepared to inform us of the reason which caused you to pay two journeys to town, on the same day?"

"No; because I have never done so!" her eyes raised fearlessly to his.

"Excuse me," and Lord Chester looked considerably taken aback; "but from your manner last time, when the matter was mentioned to you, I had cause to infer that the contrary was the case."

"I do not know what you chose to infer," and her head was thrown back proudly; "but I do know that I told you in plain English that I went up to town by the 9.45, and returned by the five."

"And you deny that you returned to the Chase in the interim?" watching her face with a close scrutiny, that was very trying.

"Most emphatically!"

"Then the schoolroom maid's assertion that she saw you standing by the door of the Countess's bedroom, is untrue?"

"As false as possible!"

"You will allow that it is very strange that the girl's story should be supported by the station-master."

"Very strange! Somebody seems to have been personating my ghost."

"Such an absurdity, as that cannot be credited for a moment!"—dignity almost subsiding into pettishness. "I really scarcely know what is the proper course to pursue in a case like this, when it would distress me beyond measure to proceed to extremities."

He took up a paper-knife and examined it gravely; whilst horribly distinct before Ruby's horror-struck eyes rose the prosaic outlines of the county gaol.

"You see," he resumed, after a pause; "there is the evidence of two witnesses against you."

"The evidence of half the world cannot alter the fact that I spent that morning and most of the afternoon with my aunt, Lady Augusta Craven!"

The aristocratic name had its due effect upon the Earl. It seemed such a monstrous thing to accuse Lady Augusta's niece of theft, and his manner to Ruby became more urbane.

"Your aunt would, of course, be prepared to support your statement?"

"Not prepared; because I don't suppose anything could astonish her more than to hear such a thing was necessary."

"Still she would support it, if we were under the unpleasant necessity of applying to her?"

"Undoubtedly she would! She would tell you that I was with her from ten o'clock till past four, when she lent me the carriage to go round by my sister's on the way to Paddington."

"This ought to be conclusive," and the Earl, considerably puzzled, shook his head. "Of the girl's assertion I should think but little, if it stood alone. It might be made from the basest of motives—to implicate you in a crime, the suspicion of which might fall on herself; but Ocelle is clear from any doubt of his impartiality. He simply mentioned the circumstance of your double journey, when trying to account for every ticket that had passed through their hands during the day."

"As I am in mourning anyone about my height, and dressed in black, might look the same in the eyes of a casual observer."

The Earl smiled. He thought that a man must be half-blind if he could not distinguish the difference between the exquisitely graceful figure of Miss St. Heliers, and that of most of the women about there.

"We will pass on to that other little matter of the diamonds," he said, after a pause. Lady Chester looked up, and fixed her eyes imploringly on Ruby. "I think, after these few days of quiet reflection, you will have come to the conclusion that it would be as well to consider the name of the giver, in order to pre-

vent any little unpleasantness which might arise on this subject."

"I will tell you so much and no more," she said, resolutely. "He was a man, who had no right to offer me a present at all, and I regarded it as little short of an insult. Ask Anna; she will tell you that the jewel-case, fresh from Howell and Jamea's, was lying on the table when she came in. Ask the post-mistress at Alverley, and she will tell you that I sent off a registered packet by the half-past twelve o'clock post on the next morning."

"I have inquired, and I find that such is the case."

"And the post-mistress, being a person of greater veracity than Ruby St. Heliers, is believed at once!"

"Miss Tompkins, having no interest in the matter, is above suspicion," said the Earl, coldly.

"I should like Miss St. Heliers to know, that if she would tell us the name of her friend, it should never pass our lips;" and the Countess looked once again entreatingly at Ruby.

"I cannot see what difference it could make. Supposing old Mr. Upton had given it to me, what good would it do to you to know it?"

"All the good in the world!" said Lord Chester, quickly. "By application to Mr. Upton, we could have the direct assurance that this star was not my wife's."

"And you think it was! Good Heavens!" she started from her seat, and laid one trembling hand on the back of the chair. Till this moment she had never fully realized that such could really be the case.

"We don't know what to think!" very gravely.

"And I have lived in your house for nearly three months!" speaking very slowly, her hand pressed to her throbbing forehead.

"You have known who my father was—as good and honourable a man as ever lived. You have let me live on loving terms with your children—and then—" with a little gasp—

"you call me a thief! I thought you couldn't mean it really—that there was some mistake about it!" looking piteously into his impassive face, as if for an explanation.

"I wish there were," he said, solemnly.

"But much as it will distress both my wife and myself, if you persist in your obstinacy, I shall have to apply to one of my brother magistrates for a warrant against you. It would not be well for me to sign it myself against one of my own household."

With a great effort, she regained her courage.

"Do as you like," she said composedly, though she was white to the lips. "If I told you his name, you would bring up something else against me; for I am a defenceless girl, without father or friend."

"Not friend!" said a musical voice behind her, and looking round in mute amazement, as her heart nearly bounded out of her bosom, she saw Lord Alverley standing at a few yards distance!

CHAPTER XXX.

If the Prince of Wales himself had walked into the room, Lord and Lady Chester could not have been more astonished. They had heard nothing drive up to the door, and they had imagined their son to be laid up in London, and far too ill to stir.

"Alverley!" exclaimed the Countess, breathlessly, as she hurried across the room to greet him; "you look as if you ought to be in your bed. Whatever brought you here?"

He smiled, kissed his mother, shook hands with the Earl, and then stretched out his hand, with a searching glance of inquiry, to Ruby.

"I am afraid I have scared you for the second time in my life—or do I find you in some trouble?"

With the eyes of his father and mother upon her, she felt she could not answer. But with a timid pressure of the hand that held her

own for a long minute, she tried to express her gratitude for his arrival.

How dearly welcome he was at that moment he almost guessed, as he felt her soft fingers clinging to his before they were hastily withdrawn.

"Go with your mother into the library, Alverley! I'll come to you in five minutes," said the Earl, gravely.

"But why mayn't I stay here?" throwing himself into a chair, with a sigh of relief, as if he were very glad to get there. "I am not up to much, and wherever I am, there I wish to be. Don't let me interrupt. I heard Miss St. Heliers mention, as I came into the room, that she was without a friend. What has occurred since I left the house, to induce her to make such an extraordinary statement?"

"You are intruding on a private conversation, and it is for Miss St. Heliers' sake that I ask you to retire."

"I appeal to Miss St. Heliers," leaning forward, with a winning smile. "Have you any objection to my hearing what is going forward?"

"None!" she said, speaking with a great effort.

"Then, perhaps, you will be kind enough to tell me?"

"What is known to the whole household cannot be called a secret!"

She looked at the Countess, who, in despair of moving Alverley against his will, took a seat on the other side of him.

"Harold told you, I suppose, of the sad loss I had?"

He nodded assent.

"I have never heard anything of it since. So your father has thought it right to have a thorough investigation in the household; and then—and then—" stumbling hopelessly.

"Perhaps it will be best for me to explain." At the sound of the soft, sweet voice, Alverley leant forward, nearly turning his back upon his mother in his anxiety to watch every expression of Ruby's eyes or lips. "On the Thursday morning I went up to town, returning by the five o'clock train, and when I went upstairs I opened a small case, which had been given me that day—her eyelids drooped till her long lashes rested on her cheeks—"and because that present happened to be a diamond star, and Anna, the school-room maid, chose to swear that I had been seen at the door of Lady Chester's room at half-past one, when I was lunching with my aunt in town, Lord Chester *naturally*," with a bitter emphasis, "came to the conclusion that I—that I—" her voice faltered.

"Impossible!" His face expressing the extremity of horror and amazement.

"I have made no accusation!" said the Earl, coldly; "only when two people swear that Miss St. Heliers was down here at the time specified, and she refuses either to produce the second star—"

"She couldn't, because she very properly sent it back!" and Alverley rose slowly from his chair, as if to give more weight to his words.

"Ha! how do you know that?"

"Because it was I who had the impertinence to send it her in the first instance."

The Earl stepped back in his surprise, whilst the Countess dropped her knitting.

"You!"

Ruby clasped her hands tightly together, and felt as if she must sink into the ground.

"Yes, I!" very calmly. "I don't suppose Miss St. Heliers told you, because she would always be loyal to a friend, and she knew that I ought to be heartily ashamed of myself!"

"You ought, indeed!" said Lord Chester, wrathfully.

"And I am," with a courteous bow to Ruby. "As to the other point, I can bring evidence to bear on that also; for Lady Augusta Craven, on whom I happened to call after Miss St. Heliers had left, told me that her niece had been with her the whole morning. There! are you satisfied?"

"Perfectly! if you haven't invented the whole story to serve your own purposes!"

Alverley bit his lips, but restrained his temper for the sake of driving that "hunted" look out of Ruby's face.

"On my honour, it is true! Is that sufficient?"

"Certainly!" then turning to Ruby, Lord Chester said, with dignity: "Miss St. Heliers, I beg to apologise most humbly if I have said or done anything to wound your feelings during the last few days. Believe me, the ordeal, if disagreeable to you, has been most painful to me."

"You ought to go down on your knees to her!" said Alverley, indignantly. "Such an insult is past all forgiveness!"

The Countess came up to her, the tears running down her cheeks, and gave her a kiss.

Ruby returned the pressure of her hand, but she could not forgive the Earl.

"All I wish to know is whether I am free, or not?"

"Free?" echoed Alverley, incredulously.

"Yes, free!" and her head was raised proudly. "Only a short quarter of an hour ago, I was on the point of being sent to gaol!"

"Not really! Father, you must have been mad!"

"Of course you are free, Miss St. Heliers," said Lord Chester, taking no notice of his son's remark. "But I hope you will not take advantage of your freedom to leave a house where you will be sincerely regretted."

Ruby bowed, and walked slowly to the door. Alverley followed and held it open for her, taking advantage of the opportunity to whisper, "Am I forgiven?"

She looked at him, her whole heart in her eyes, knowing that it was the last time that they were ever to look into each other's faces in this world; and then she turned away hastily, lest he should see her tears.

"For the last time!" she murmured to herself, as she went up the staircase and down the corridor. "For the last time!"

Though he looked like a corpse newly-risen from the grave, he had been loyal to her first call. Yes, she would never forget it. He would go on his way and she on hers, and their paths must never cross each other, but it would be something to think of in the long years to come. He had not failed her, and he never would; only she must never call to him again. In spite of pain and sickness he had come; and she had not even had the grace to ask one single question about his arm. Truly she must have grown very selfish during the last few days.

She could scarcely see to look her boxes for the blind tapers; but they were done at last, and she rang the bell for them to be carried downstairs.

Mrs. Nicholson came bustling into the room instead of the footmen, and asked if she were really going.

"But, my dear! I thought I had managed so cleverly in getting the ring sent up to him, and now he has done no good!"

"Indeed, he has! Thank you so much. You have saved my life. He has made it all right, and I am quite happy. What I should have done without you, I don't know!" and putting her arms round the old woman's neck, she kissed her again and again.

"Oh! to think I should have to say good-bye!" and the housekeeper fairly burst into tears as she sank down on the foot of the bed.

"I must give you something, however small, to remember me by. Oh! dear Mrs. Nicholson, I have nothing but this little handkerchief. It is marked with my name, and will make you think of me!" pressing her hand.

"I don't want anything to make me think of you," she said, gruffly. "I had better by half forget you, if I could, and then I mightn't feel so lonesome!"

There was a sound of small feet along the passage, and the children rushed into the room. With one bound they sprang into Ruby's arms, stifling her breath in their rapturous hugs.

"Oh! we have wanted you so much, but mamma would never let us come!" and May tightened the clasp of her arms round her neck.

"Clem said you were ill, and wouldn't wait us, or I never would have stayed away; and now I see it was all a sham. You've got your bonnet on, and sick people never go out!" and Beatrice looked as if she had been cheated.

Ruby felt as if she could not speak; she only kissed them repeatedly, and pressed them to her heart. Poor little things! What would they say if they only knew?

A footman knocked at the door, and asked if her boxes were ready. As they were being carried out, the children looked at them in surprise.

"What are they taking them away for?"

"When people go on a journey, they want most of their things with them," and Ruby stroked May's hair affectionately.

"Are you going on a journey?" from both at once, breathlessly.

Ruby nodded.

"Coming back soon?" with little hands patting her face.

No answer.

"The carriage is at the door, miss," said Mrs. Nicholson, with a gulp.

"Good-bye! dear children." She bent over them with wistful eyes.

The children looked from her white face to the housekeeper's tearful countenance, and a sudden panic seized them.

"You are coming back? Oh! say you are coming back!" clinging to her so tight that she could not move.

"You must be very good dears, and don't forget me. Good-bye! oh, good-bye!"

Then she put them away from her firmly, but gently, and hurried out of the room. With a passionate burst of grief they ran after her, crying that she must not go—they would never be happy again. "Never—never—never!" sobbed little May, hiding her face in Ruby's skirts.

The Countess came out of the library, looking very pale, followed by Lady Clementina.

Lady Chester kissed her affectionately, and said, in a loud enough voice for all the servants to hear,—

"And I shall be sincerely glad to see you back, whenever you like to return," at the same time slipping an envelope into her hand.

Lady Clementina murmured her polite regrets, and told the children not to fear Miss St. Helier's dress.

Ruby gave one last look round the hall. The door of the study was closed. Inside Lord Chester was evidently having a stormy scene with his son, and she must go without a word of farewell. Her lips quivered as she gently unlocked the clasp of the children's hands, and, not trusting herself to speak another word, stepped quickly into the carriage.

"You shan't go!" cried Beatrice, running out under the portico, and stamping with rage and grief. "I'd rather everybody went but you."

The light streamed down on the little childish figure, then the carriage drove off; the Countess waved her hand, the great doors were shut; and Ruby St. Heliers had taken her last look at Chester Chase, with a white face turned towards the doubtful future, and a heart overburdened with sorrow.

She could see the dim outline of the coppice in the distance, in which she had first met Lord Alverley. Since that night of the poachers' affray, how much had happened! There had been trials and difficulties which seemed likely to affect the whole of her after-life. But now all was over, and she must begin again with what courage she could muster, her spirit weighed down by the remembrance of past pain, her eyes firmly closed to the perilous dreams of what might have been.

When she reached the station she was conscious that the stationmaster gave her a

curious look; and, remembering his false statement about herself, she grew confused, and absently took a first-class ticket instead of a second.

Although she was leaving the Chase of her own free will she felt inexpressibly sad. There she had suffered, indeed, the utmost pain and indignity; but new passions had been stirred in the depths of her girlish heart, and, bewildered by their unacknowledged sweetness, she only knew that she was very sorry when the hour came to say good-bye.

The tears were stealing down her cheeks, the engine had given its preliminary puff, the guard had already waved his flag and put one foot on the step of the van, when a dog-cart dashed up the station-hill, and a loud voice shouted to the driver to stop. Then the door of the carriage was flung open, and someone sank, rather than sat down, breathlessly, on the opposite seat.

(To be continued.)

He who never forgets his old friends, and cherishes his attachment for them as warmly as ever, no matter how much time, space or fortune have kept them apart, is one of those rare beings with whom heaven has endowed the earth, that society may not utterly wither, through the influence of ingratitude, selfishness and the incessant changes in life. As you advance in life, make new acquaintances, but never forget old friends. How much happier the human race would be if they followed this advice; those who parted, meeting after long absence not with lessened interest in each other as now, but as brothers meet brothers, their affection more glowing than ever.

TREATMENT OF CHILDREN.

The little trials of children should be averted or sympathized with as far as possible. They should not be unnecessarily thwarted in their objects, which, at a very early age, they pursue with eagerness. Let them, if possible, complete their projects without interruption.

A child, for example, before he can speak, is trotting after a ball; the mother snatches him up at the moment to be washed and dressed, and the crowlike-pleased youngster directly throws himself into a violent passion. Whereas had she first entered into his views, kindly assisted him in gaining his object, and then gently taken him up, this trial would have been spared, and his temper preserved.

We should avoid keeping children in suspense, which is often done from a kind motive, though with injurious effect.

If a child asks his mother for a cake, and she can give it him, let her tell him so at once, and assure him that he shall have it; but should she be unable to grant his request, or know it would be improper for him, do not let her hesitate; do not let her say, "I will think of it; we shall see," but kindly and decidedly refuse him. If he sees his mother going out, and petitions to accompany her, it will be better she should say, "No," or "Yes," at once, for he will receive with ease an immediate but kind refusal, when, probably, he would cry bitterly at a denial, after his expectations had been raised by suspense.

The dress of children should not be made the subject of dispute or irritation. Personal cleanliness is indispensable; and children, whether it tease them or not, must be thoroughly washed. But their clothes should be so contrived as not to interfere with their freedom and enjoyment, or to require any degree of attention. It is desirable to keep them as neat as the case admits of; but in respect to this a mother must take care that neither her own temper nor theirs is sacrificed.

By these means, accompanied by a quick sympathy with the peculiar characters and peculiar infirmities of children, much may be done toward forming among them a habit of good temper, which is indispensable to perfect happiness either at home or abroad.

WILFUL, BUT LOVING.

CHAPTER IX.

"It only rests with you to have London at your feet. You have the gift of genius, and if you use your powers success is certain!"

Those were Michael D'Arcy's words to his father's favourite pupil. The chorus-master of the Prince's Opera House had never managed to make a name in the musical world himself, but he knew talent when he saw it, and when Dora had finished her second song he was as certain of her future fame as though he had seen her standing on the stage half smothered with bouquets.

The words seemed burned into Dora's brain. She was not pretty. According to Lord St. Clare she was worse than plain. She had made a great mistake. She had given away the treasure of her love to a man who had not one iota of affection for her. Hers was an empty tenure of life until this promise of fame came to gild it.

"You have scruples!" said D'Arcy, misunderstanding her silence. "You have been brought up to think theatres wrong—you dislike the thought of appearing on the stage!"

Dora's beautiful eyes flashed with excitement.

"I long for the moment to come!" she answered, quickly. "I have nothing but music to live for in the world. If you will only help me to an engagement I will bless you all my days!"

He smiled at her eagerness.

"I have brought out many a singer," he said, kindly, "but never one with a voice like yours, mademoiselle. You will take the world by storm!"

A long conversation followed. Dora told her position frankly. She had a little stock of ready money, enough to keep her a few months. She had no relations whom she need consult. Her future was emphatically her own, to dispose of how she would.

"You must go to Italy," said D'Arcy, promptly. "Six months at Naples, and you will have picked up all you need."

Dora hesitated.

"The money!" she said, frankly; "it would cost so much to go abroad!"

"Not an alarming amount. You must make a bargain with me, mademoiselle. I will advance sufficient money for your studies; and procure you an engagement at the Prince's Opera House on condition that you pay me a certain percentage of your salary—that is fair enough!"

But the innate honesty of the girl's nature made her hesitate.

"If I died!" she suggested, timidly; "if I lost my voice, Mr. D'Arcy, how should I repay you?"

"Tut, tut!" interposed Michael's better half. "We're not going to think of such dismal things! And now, what are we to call you?"

A crimson flush suffused the girl's face. Mrs. D'Arcy suspected nothing; her husband guessed a great deal.

"We must find you a grand stage name," he said, promptly. "People like something high-flown for an artiste. Beatrice di Sans Souci—now there's a splendid title!"

"It is too grand!"

"I like the name of Beatrice amazingly!" put in Mrs. D'Arcy. "I wish I had been called Beatrice D'Arcy!"

"It sounds well!" said the chorus-master, reflectively. "Mademoiselle, I look on you as a sort of legacy from my father. How would you like to take his name? I could do more for you if people believed I had an interest in your prosperity. When I introduce you to the manager of the Prince's Opera may it be in the character of my niece—Miss D'Arcy?"

The lonely wail agreed gratefully, and from that day she became part and parcel of the little family at 44, Colville-road. Mrs.

D'Arcy gave up all idea of letting apartments. It had been difficult enough to keep people with the extreme musical tastes of the household, and now that there was someone to occupy the empty rooms, she calmly took the card out of the window altogether.

It was wonderful how soon Dora was domesticated at Camberwell—how at home she felt with the simple, kindly couple who had sheltered her in the time of her necessity. Very early after her arrival she had been taken by Michael to the Prince's Opera House and introduced to the manager, Mr. Gordon. He heard her sing, and turned with a smile to his old subordinate.

"Your niece is, indeed, a *rara avis*. Remember, Michael, when she returns from Italy she must make her *début* here. I shall consider it a personal injury if you allow any other house to have the monopoly of her talents."

"I am going to send her to Naples in April," returned Michael D'Arcy. "Next spring, sir, I may remind you of your offer."

"Mademoiselle," said the manager, turning suddenly to Dora, "remember one thing in your training—to succeed you must be not only a singer but an actress. An actress must have fire and passion. Young English ladies are generally too cold and self-contained. Remember you must learn to feel, and to show us what you feel!"

The girl raised her speaking eyes to his face.

"I think I feel too much," she said, simply; and then at a sign from D'Arcy she left the gentlemen alone, and set off to return to Camberwell and Colville-road.

"She will do," said Gordon, slowly. "She will improve every day she lives, or I am mistaken!"

"Her appearance is against her," returned D'Arcy, a little regretfully; "she looks nothing but a timid little school-girl."

"She will be a beautiful woman."

"Beautiful! Sir, she has no promise of it yet."

"She has every promise of it! Her charms are not developed, that is all. That girl will break many a heart; she has it in her face!"

The manager did not see Dora again. Very early in April Michael D'Arcy obtained a brief holiday, and escorted his self-constituted ward to Naples. Here he made arrangements for her to board with a musical family and attend the Conservatoire. An experienced tragedian was to give her lessons in acting.

"How can I ever thank you?" said the girl, as she bade him good-bye.

"Succeed!" was the brief answer. "You have it in you. Let us be proud of our Beatrice!"

So utterly cut off from her old life and associations, as far removed from Pennington as from Castle St. Clare, with new friends, new surroundings, even a new name, the girl who had once expected to be Countess of St. Clare worked and studied with a zeal, an energy which knew no bounds, to succeed in her profession to gratify kind-hearted Michael D'Arcy.

Such was her ambition. For all time she must live apart from those nearest to her in blood; for all time there would be an aching void in her heart. Fame might, perhaps, fill that void. She would at least try.

Six months had been fixed for her stay in Naples, and in the short October days she returned to England. This time she travelled alone, under the care of a family who were going to Dover.

When she reached Victoria Station the first object she saw was Michael D'Arcy, a roll of music under his arm, his kindly face full of benevolent pleasure; but the musician took no notice of Dora. At last, in despair, she went up to him, and laid one hand upon his arm.

"Don't you know me, uncle?"

They had taught her to call them uncle and aunt in the few weeks she lived with them. Michael started at the sound of her voice, and stared like a person in a dream.

"Am I so much altered?" asked the girl.

gently. "I thought you would be pleased to see me!"

"My dear child!" he said, quaintly; "you have been transformed as much as ever was Cinderella in the fairy-tale! Do you never look in a glass?"

"Sometimes!"

"And what do you see?"

"That I have grown older and more womanly."

"I see something else! My dear, when you went away you were a little unfashionable school-girl—now you are a beautiful woman!"

"Uncles shouldn't flatter!"

"It is the truth! You will find plenty of people ready to tell you so, my dear."

And Michael was right: Miss Macle's awkward pupil—the girl whom Lord St. Clare had declared to be positively without any single attraction—had blossomed into a woman, about whose loveliness there could be no question.

Above the middle height, of a slight, graceful figure, her face was yet her chief charm. Her complexion was pure and delicate; her large dark blue eyes were fringed with long dark lashes; her chestnut hair waved naturally, and was thrown back to show her broad, white forehead.

It was a face people would pause to look at in a crowd. The smile was rare, but full of sweetness; the expression of the eyes had a haunting pathos, beautiful and fascinating to a degree. Dowered with a voice of wondrous power, a brilliant career must be before her; and Michael felt triumphant as he handed her into a cab, till he remembered the manager's prophecy,—

"She will break many a heart!"

About that Michael cared but little. He regarded the young men of the present day as having hearts made of some new patent material warranted not to break or even crack! But how about her own? He knew enough of genius to be aware it was often allied to a highly sensitive, nervous nature.

What if this beautiful girl, who seemed so strangely thrown upon his care, should have her life's happiness wrecked upon the quicksands of disappointment?

"My dear!" he said simply, as they drove along, "I hope you will be happy."

"I shall be happy if I may sing," she answered gently. Oh, Uncle D'Arcy! I think if I lost my voice I should die! It is all I have left to live for!"

44, Colville-road, was little changed. Mrs. D'Arcy, in a brilliant new cap, welcomed the wanderer enthusiastically.

"My dear!" exclaimed the good woman, "Italy must be the place to make people beautiful for ever. I never saw anyone so improved!"

They were alone in Dora's room. The girl hid her face on Mrs. D'Arcy's motherly breast.

"Aunt," she said, in a trembling voice, "will you answer me one question? When I came here on that cold February morning, and you saw me first, did you think me very ugly?"

Mrs. D'Arcy was a little taken aback.

"I didn't think you pretty," she replied, at length. "I don't believe I ever thought about it. I remember you reminded me of a little tired child—someone so weak and gentle—they oughtn't to be running about the world alone."

"And you didn't hate me because I was ugly?"

Mrs. D'Arcy shook her head energetically.

"You were not ugly, my dear! People would not have called you pretty, perhaps; but there was a sort of look in your face that went to my heart; and for all you're so altered and improved the same look's there just the same now."

"Italy was very nice. But oh! I am glad to be back in England. I want to be at work."

"Well, there's plenty of work before you, my dear. Michael talks of your singing at a few concerts before you come out just to give you courage."

But when Mr. Gordon saw Miss D'Arcy he emphatically negated this course.

"She has fulfilled my prophecy," he said to his old friend, smiling; "and I venture to predict she will make a name, but no one must see her until she comes out in opera. It is almost a pity you didn't keep her in Italy a while longer."

Michael D'Arcy laughed at the desire. He was very proud of his adopted niece, and he liked to hear the manager praise her; but he had no idea of keeping Beatrice shut up for the four or five months before her services would be required at the Prince's Opera House, which establishment became a theatre pure and simple during the winter.

The musician had a large circle of friends, but very few people came to the little house in the Colville-road.

D'Arcy was a welcome guest everywhere, but he was not fond enough of society to accept many invitations, and so his acquaintances had almost ceased to give them. He preferred spending his leisure at home, practising his favourite art, or setting songs to music, in which he was quite expert.

All the rising poets of the day were proud to have their words accompanied by the rich, sweet melodies which seemed to float like magic through the musician's brain.

Mrs. D'Arcy was not musical, although, as she often expressed it, she was "steeped in music up to the eyebrows."

No she was not in the least musical, seeing the many people who called to engage her husband's talents, for their verses bothered her.

Callers who knew nothing of Michael D'Arcy personally, somehow never conceived a great opinion of his genius after an interview with his wife.

"My dear," she said to Beatrice, as Dora now was styled, "they badger me; they will talk about metres and strophes till they make my head ache. Why can't they come when Michael's at home?"

"Let me see them," offered our heroine. "I will let them read about metres and strophes to their heart's content, so that they are persuaded Uncle's music is just the sort for them."

Mrs. D'Arcy accepted readily, and whenever a stranger appeared henceforward it was always the beautiful songstress who received them.

She never uttered a note—she never spoke of herself or her own art—but she listened to their hopes and wishes; and one and all went away persuaded that "Miss D'Arcy fully appreciated genius, although she might not be musical herself."

Then when she had been in England's fortnight, as she sat reading in the little front parlour, a card was brought her, inscribed,—

"Herbert Cecil."

In one moment the girl's heart seemed to stand still. She was walled back again in memory to the winter before. She seemed to see again the tasteful furniture of Castle St. Clare. In fancy she sat in the grand old library, and heard a man's rich, deep voice beg her acceptance of a wedding-gift.

Ah! what strange charms had life had for her when she last saw Herbert Cecil!

She was within three days of her bridal, and now all thought of that was over. Never, she felt in her heart of hearts, would orange blossoms encircle her brow—never would bells ring out a joyous peal for her. She thought time and separation had done their work. She had fondly hoped Alan St. Clare's image no longer filled her heart. Alas! she discovered her mistake. The very sound of his friend's name stirred her deepest feelings.

He came in, the same courteous, high-bred man she remembered.

Ah! how the recollection of his kindness to the little unwelcome relation thrilled her! She wondered if he would recognize her. She need not have feared.

Herbert started as he entered, but not because he traced any resemblance in her to Dora Clifford—only because the vision which

presented itself seemed to him the fairest he had ever seen.

She bowed; he did not know her; that at least filled her with relief.

"I think there is some mistake," said Herbert, simply. "I came to see Mr. D'Arcy."

"He will be home in half an hour. If you have come upon business, and cannot wait to see him, perhaps you will entrust me with a message?"

"I will wait," he said, simply. "Not that I doubt your powers as an ambassador; but because Mr. D'Arcy and I are old friends."

"You know my uncle?"

"I have known Mr. and Mrs. D'Arcy for years. I was not aware they possessed a niece."

The door opened, and Mrs. D'Arcy appeared. She wore her best and brightest cap—pink with yellow flowers; one glance at that and Dora knew that Mr. Cecil was an educated guest.

"To think of it being you!" exclaimed Mrs. D'Arcy, wringing the author's hand nearly off, "and I believed it was some grand stranger. We have lots of strangers now-a-days. Mike sets so many songs to music I'm sure I wonder he can think of any fresh ones. You see our niece has come home to live as an upstart."

"I have been, telling Miss D'Arcy what a surprise it is to me to find her here."

"And your coming is a surprise, too! Mr. Cecil is a great writer, Beatrice; and he picked your uncle out of a ditch one day in the country years and years ago, and they've been friends ever since!"

"I was only a lad then, Miss D'Arcy; it is almost fifteen years ago."

"Well, I'm glad you've come!" assented her hostess.

"We see no one now, Mr. Cecil, who isn't musical, and I get a little tired. Singing's all very well, but talking's a great deal better. You'll stay to tea, of course?"

"I shall be delighted."

He looked at Miss D'Arcy, but her eyes were bent on the ground. She was wondering if he had seen Alan lately, wondering yet more if he had been best man at Alan's marriage. No doubt that was quite an old affair now.

"And you've not been near us for a year!" cried Mrs. D'Arcy, reproachfully. "That's what you call friendship. Ah! I knew you; you like your lords and ladies better than us plain folks!"

"I don't know many lords, Mrs. D'Arcy. In fact, I am only intimate with one, and he was an old schoolfellow of mine."

Mrs. D'Arcy looked up—she fixed her beautiful eyes upon Herbert's face.

"I like to hear of old schoolfellow's meeting, again; it proves there is such a thing as friendship."

"And have you ever doubted it?"

"Just enough to be glad it is proved. I think no friendship can be equal to one made in youth."

But Herbert said no more respecting his friend; instead, he drew Dora out on the subject of Italy; he himself knew Naples well, and very soon the conversation became quite a *tête-à-tête*; and Mrs. D'Arcy, seeing she could be spared, went down to order a "relish" to supplement the family tea.

When Michael D'Arcy entered the manager's prophecy rang in his ears. Beatrice sat on a low chair by the fire; Herbert was opposite. He seemed already to hang upon her words—already his grave, thoughtful face seemed to yearn for a smile from the beautiful one kept so persistently in the shade.

"Why are you sitting in the dark?" demanded the master of the house. "Beatrice, my dear! run and send someone to light the gas."

The two men shook hands. Perhaps Herbert was a little vexed at the interruption of his enjoyment; but he never showed it.

"You have a treasure I little suspected!" he said, simply. "Where has Miss D'Arcy been hidden all the times I have visited you?"

"She was at school for years, and then in

Italy. Beatrice has no time for society, Mr. Cecil; she is studying for the stage."

"The stage!" in pained surprise.

"And why not?" a little indignantly. "She is beautiful enough to succeed without thinking of her voice. It is quite a secret at present, but I can trust an old friend like you. She makes her debut in the spring as *Aminia* in *La Sonnambula*."

Before he left, Herbert managed to ask the girl how she liked her profession.

"I adore it!" she answered. "I think nothing could make me happier."

"It will be a hard life."

"It will be a life of work! I could not lead a vagabond, aimless existence, Mr. Cecil; it would kill me."

"I don't like to hear you say so."

"Why?"

"With your face," he said, gravely, "you were meant to be the queen of a happy home. There are women enough to command the admiration of the many. There is something that should be more precious to a true woman than the mere applause of the multitudes."

She never attempted to misunderstand him.

"You mean love?"

He bowed his head.

"It is a great mistake," said the beautiful stranger. "They say love is the crown and glory of a woman's life, Mr. Cecil; and yet in nearly all the histories one hears it brings only pain."

"You are not speaking from experience, I am sure?"

"I am speaking from conviction. I have not heard of great many love stories, but in every one that I remember one heart ached at every peal of marriage bells."

"Your theory is a strange one!"

"Is it? I think it very simple! A loves B, B loves C, and C loves A; that is how life generally goes."

"This is heresy. What happiness can there be in such cross purposes as that?"

"I suppose it is not always so. There may be exceptions, but generally of every pair at the altar one loves, the other is loved; that is all the difference."

"Which shall you do?"

"Neither!"

"You speak positively!"

"I shall never love anyone except my art—that is enough to fill my life."

"Then music is more absorbing than literature. I, too, love my art dearly, but it does not fill all my life; it does not prevent my having many lonely hours."

"Then come and spend them here!" cried Mrs. d'Arcy, hospitably. She had entered the room in time only to hear the latter part of the sentence. "You will always be welcome, Mr. Cecil, if we are not too musical for you to put up with."

"Thank!" he said, lightly. "I will take you at your word. If I come too often you will have to turn me out."

From that night forward he was constantly at Colville-road. In the beginning, Michael d'Arcy had a few qualms respecting Dora.

"It would be a thousand pities for her to fall in love with Herbert Cecil," he told his wife. "It would be the failure of her career. He would never suffer his wife to be on the stage."

"He will never marry one," returned Mrs. d'Arcy, with conviction. "And I am quite sure nothing would induce our Beatrice to give up the stage."

And then Michael, having relieved his conscience, let things take their course. Herbert found more time on his hands than anyone would have believed possible for such a prolific writer, and all his leisure was spent with the musical little household.

No one suspected the real motive of his visits, least of all the object of them. After that first evening Dora was perfectly at home with Mr. Cecil—the fear of being recognized had quite died out. He had an interest in her eyes as Alan's friend. Besides, he seemed as if of kin between her and the past. Through him she hoped to hear some news of the man who had treated her so heartlessly; some mention

of the home which might have been hers. She never thought of love in connection with Mr. Cecil. Dora's own heart was filled with Alan's image; that she never guessed a sound offer of marriage would come to her, much less from one who had known her long ago.

CHAPTER X.

And so—all unwitting of Herbert Cecil's interest in her—all innocent of any attempt to win his love—yet the beautiful, lonely girl contrived to make herself the dearest thing on earth to the grave, scholarly man who had believed it in his power to go through the world unscathed by the darts of Cupid's archery.

The surrender was very swift. Three weeks after that first meeting he knew the truth that for him there was but one woman. If Mr. d'Arcy's lovely niece refused him, his life would lose its crowning joy.

His love knocked down all barriers, conquered all prejudices. He was a proud man, and he knew the d'Arcy's sprang from nothing. He was a literary man, and ought to have married someone with grand connections to advance his talents; but neither pride nor worldly wisdom could stand before a stronger passion. He would have given up the whole world to possess that little hand; and each time he came to Colville-road he resolved to risk all and try his fate, but the opportunity he sought was long in coming.

At last fortune favoured him one dull, November afternoon. He called at the little house which contained his treasure, and was greeted by the servant with—"Missus has just gone out, sir, and master won't be home till late."

"Is Miss d'Arcy at home?"

"She's in the parlour, sir."

Herbert entered abruptly—a strange mixture of hope and fear struggling in his breast. He knew that Beatrice d'Arcy, with her talent and beauty, could expect a far higher position than he might offer her. He knew that to many a girl a stage life offered many charms, only he fancied she had never treated him quite as a stranger. From the very first there had been a secret, mysterious bond of sympathy between them; and he believed, if she would only give herself to him, he could make her happy—for he knew she was not happy now. Sweet and affectionate as was her manner to Mr. and Mrs. d'Arcy, she still seemed out of her proper place in the little house in Colville-road. She always had a strange, yearning look of expectation in her beautiful eyes—a far off, dreamy expression in their azure depths which pierced Herbert's heart as though with an arrow, and yet struck him with a bewildering sense of familiarity.

She was sitting in a low chair by the fire, dressed in a plain blue serge, a little piece of fancy work in her hand—her thoughts, too, evidently far away. She half started on Mr. Cecil's entrance.

"Did I frighten you?" he asked her, with that peculiar ring of tenderness in his voice true men only use towards one woman—the one they hope to make their own.

"A little!" returned the girl, simply.

"Uncle and aunt are both out, and it is a wet day; I thought no one would come. I believe I had lost myself in a day dream."

He smiled.

"I hope it was a pleasant one. Were you dreaming of the brilliant success everyone predicts for you in the spring?"

She shook her head.

"I was thinking of the past. Mr. Cecil, do you think anyone is ever perfectly happy?"

"What a question! Very few people, I fear; but, at least, I hope you will be of their number. You should be if I had the ruling of the future!"

"You are very kind to me!"

"Who would not be kind to you, Beatrice?" using her Christian name almost unconsciously in his earnestness. "Are you quite set upon this stage plan? Will nothing turn you from it?"

"I love music for its own sake, returned the girl, slowly; "and my voice is all I have. I think I would rather sing than do anything."

"Then it is simply for art's sake, not for love of fame. It is not the flattery of an idle crowd—the feverish excitement of the footlights and the glare of the stage that draws you?"

"I want to have something to fill up my life," she said, raising her blue eyes to his face. "I am only nineteen—hardly that. I cannot spend my life without some aim or object."

"And so you have made fame your idol?"

"I want to succeed for my own sake—for my own. So that I can sing—so that I am not a burden to uncle and aunt—I do not mind."

"Fame is a hard mistress."

"And yet you woo her, too!"

"Fame is for a man," he said, sternly. "A woman should be satisfied with love!"

He could see the tears shining in her eyes.

"If a woman has love, she wants nothing else!" said Beatrice, simply. "I would blame a woman who loved, and was beloved, and yet sought something beyond, as harshly as you could do."

"Beatrice!"

The very sound of his voice told her what was coming. She longed to stay him, but it was too late. She could only sit trembling, with her two hands locked nervously together, while he poured out his story—the story of a true man's love, which she was yet powerless to gratify.

"My darling!" Herbert cried—his reserve melting before that beautiful face; "I have loved you ever since I saw you. I am not a rich man, but I can give my wife an easy home. If you will only trust yourself to me, Beatrice, I will make you happy!"

No answer; but he could see her breast heaving with sobs, and he did not despair.

"I am asking a great deal," he went on, tenderly. "With your beauty, with your voice, I doubt not all London will be at your feet—riches, titles, and honours will be offered. I have nothing but my love; only, Beatrice, it is so true and intense, so strong and fervent, that I believe it would make up to you for all."

She put out one of her hands—those thin, white, taper fingers—and laid it on his arm.

"Don't say any more. I thank you again and again. But, oh! it can never be!"

"Are you quite sure, Beatrice? I would wait so patiently, my darling. I would teach you to love me in time, my sweetest!"

She was crying bitterly.

"I wish I had never been born!" she moaned. "You have been so good to me. I liked you so much. I was so grateful for your friendship. And oh! I never thought of this!"

With the instinct of a noble nature he put away his own grief to comfort hers.

"It was not your fault. How should you guess my folly—a child like you? And yet, Heaven help me, I was mad enough to think you cared for me!"

"I do care!" said the girl, gently. "As a friend I love you dearly; so dearly that I will not take you at your word, and come to you without giving you my whole heart."

"But, in time!" he urged. "If you care for me a little, surely in time—"

"I shall never care for anyone like that!" answered the girl, a crimson blush flushing her face. "I shall never feel as you would wish. Never, while I live!"

An instinct told Herbert she spoke the truth, but he was loth to believe it.

"In time!" he pleaded. "If I go away and return when you have grown used to the idea? I spoke to you too suddenly to-day, and frightened you with my vehemence."

Beatrice, for all answer, raised the hand she still held and pressed her lips to it. Then, gaining courage from the mute caress, she said—

"I shall never change—never while I live. Turn your head away from me, Mr. Cecil. Don't look at me while I tell you of my miserable folly, and you shall know why."

He obeyed her. There was a perfect silence in the room—you might have heard a pin drop.

"There are a great many sorts of love," began Beatrice at last; "and some people say that second love is stronger than first. I do not know how it would be with others—I can only judge myself. My heart can hold but one love; it is all over and done with—a story of the past, and yet, while I live, that love will live too!"

He turned towards her. The blush had faded now; she was paler even than usual, but there was no trace of embarrassment on her face. As he looked at the pure, white brow, the world of feeling shining in the blue eyes, Herbert knew she had spoken the truth; and a great regret for the happiness he had missed filled his heart even at the moment when he realized that for all time her answer to him would be the same.

"Poor child!" he said, with deep emotion. "I never thought of this. I never imagined once that your heart was buried with the dead!"

She forced herself to contradict his last words. "He is not dead," she said, slowly. "It is only he found out his mistake in time. He did not care for me as he thought!"

Never a suspicion of her identity with Dora Clifford came to Herbert. He only marvelled how any man could have acted so basely.

"Not care for you!" he murmured. "Not care for you!"

"It is all over now," said Beatrice, with a smile of rare sweetness. "We have gone our different ways. He has, I believe, a beautiful wife beside him, and I—I have my art. You will not misjudge me now; you will believe I enter my profession not from envy of fame, or greed for public applause, but because my life is empty. For all time it must be a lonely one, and I would fain fill it with busy work and active interests to help me to bear its void."

"I thought you a child!" said Herbert, hoarsely.

"And I am a woman! Ah! but a sorrow of that kind kills one's childhood quickly. Don't think me gloomy or disappointed, Mr. Cecil," she said, with her own bright smile. "I have plenty of happiness in my life. I have only told you this to prove how impossible it is for me to feel as you wish."

"And you make my disappointment all the keener for showing me what I have lost. Oh! Beatrice, it will be hard work to give you up—to resign all hope."

"You have plenty left to hope for!" said the girl, bravely. "With talents like yours your fame is only a question of time. You will find someone to share that fame—someone who can give you her whole heart, and till then—"

"The till then will be to my life's end!" he interrupted her gloomily.

"Till then I will be your friend—you shall tell me your joys and sorrows. I will sympathize in your success, and feel for your failure. Until another love fills your life I offer you my friendship."

He bent over the little hand and kissed it. "I will try and be worthy of the boon. I am leaving town soon—to-morrow I think. I could not bear to see you just yet. When I return I shall have not forgotten my wishes, but conquered my wild regret. In a little while, long before your *déjà*, I shall come to claim your promise."

"Where shall you go?" asked Beatrice, gently. "November is a gloomy month for roaming."

"I am going on a visit. Some friends of mine, Captain and Mrs. Fane, have a furnished house at Winchester, and I shall quarter myself on them."

"Is there a Miss Fane?"

"Two—but they are under six. No, Beatrice, I am not so mad as to woo another to cure my heart of the pain you have inflicted. I would rather have your friendship than another's love. Do you know I had thought to go through my life unscathed? I have seen

so many men wrecked through what the world calls love that I meant to steer clear of it."

"I wish you had!"

"I do not wish it myself! I would rather feel the pain I do now than have lost the pleasure of knowing you. I never felt an interest in any woman's face before except a little uncultivated school-girl's and my feeling for her was only pity, poor child!"

"Did she die?" wondering if he were alluding to her own story.

"It would have been better if she had! No; she left her home, and no news of her has ever reached her friends."

"Perhaps she was unhappy?" moved to the defence of the nameless heroine.

"She was heart-broken. Do not think I am blaming her; she was the victim of a man's wandering fancy, and the wiles of as wicked a coquette as ever breathed."

"Do not speak so bitterly!"

"I feel bitterly on the subject. Do not think I was one of the victims—I was merely a looker-on! I saw my friend—the dearest friend I had—dishonoured and disgraced!"

Beatrice looked her interest, and he went on.

"Ah! you pity me because I love a good woman and cannot win her; but he deserves more pity still. He sacrificed his honour, his sense of right, his every principle; and then, when poverty set in, he was dismissed like a discarded toy."

"Where is he?"

"He, Alan!"—the name escaping him in forgetfulness—"travelling abroad, and she has made a brilliant match—horses, carriages, jewels. In that case certainly the wicked triumphed."

They had both risen—he was loth to go. There was to him a sad pleasure in that lingering farewell. Never more could he stand at Miss D'Arcy's side as her lover. He must not see her again until he could accept the friendship she offered him.

Her hand was in his—those wonderful blue eyes were raised to his face—the strength of the temptation almost overcame him.

"May I?" he whispered. Then as she bowed her head in assent he pressed his lips to hers. But there was no hope—no triumph in that embrace. It was the seal of the past—it was drawing the curtain on the most sacred chamber of his heart. That kiss had in it all the sadness which a lover feels when he presses his lips for the last time to the fair, cold cheek of his dead fiancée.

The door closed on him. Beatrice D'Arcy, the musician's niece, disappeared; in her place sat Dora Clifford, Lord St. Clare's sometime betrothed. The girl put one hand to her head and tried to collect her thoughts; but, alas! the task was too much for her, in spite of Herbert Cecil's disappointment and her pity at causing it. She could realize but one idea—Alan was free for Blanche Delaval had bestowed her beauty on another.

(To be continued.)

H A B I T.

THE tyranny of habit is the most crushing of despotism. The chains forged by another are shaken off with comparative ease, but those fabricated by ourselves too frequently fetter our limbs as long as life continues.

Hence, it is of the utmost importance in early life to adopt those good habits, which, becoming a second nature, render in time the discharge of our duties to ourselves and others a comparatively easy task.

A traveller in Italy relates the case of a priest, who for the purpose of self-mortification, condemned himself to sleep for a certain period of time upon a bed of spikes—a sort of inverted harrow. For a long time the practice was what it was intended to be, the severest kind of penance; but the habit after awhile became not only endurable, but indispensable—so that after his period of penance

had expired the devotee actually retained possession of his iron couch from preference.

On the same principle, soldiers, who have passed many years in the field, sleeping in tents, or in the open air, have found a roof and a bed within doors intolerable, and sleep unattainable, except by a renewed resort to their old campaign habits.

Captain Marryat relates a strong example of the force of habit in the case of a certain chaplain in the navy, who had formerly been a lieutenant on shipboard, and who, whenever his ship came into action, could not refrain—such was the force of habit—from seizing a sword, and mingling personally in the contest, notwithstanding his clerical garb and functions.

The cat metamorphosed into a woman—in the fairy tale—could not help hunting mice whenever they appeared.

A footman promoted to a gentleman by an unexpected legacy, and living in great style, could never break himself of the habit of running to the door whenever he heard the bell ring.

During the siege of Boston, when General Gage granted permits for females only to leave the town, a young man attempted to pass the lines disguised as a woman. The sentinel on duty doubted whether the pretended lady had the necessary permit. "Yes, I have," responded she, or rather he, "I've got it here in my *pantaloon's pocket*!"

As in trifles, so in more serious matters, the force of habit is frequently invincible. Many inebriates, though convinced of the fatality of their course of life, are yet enslaved by habit to their destruction, and it requires an iron energy, constant watchfulness and care over themselves, on the part of the reformed, to avoid relapses into their old habits. It is true that perseverance will overcome these obstacles; new modes of life become habitual, and the force of old associations will, of course, grow daily weaker and less imperative.

The vulgar and revolting practice of using profane language is, in nine cases out of ten, not the result of a moral perversity, so much as a bad habit. Early vicious associations, at a period when the moral sensibility is really overcome by novelty and the faculty of imitation, plant the seeds of evil, which only the strictest moral culture of after years can wholly eradicate.

The training of men is like the culture of a tree—it is easy to give to even the sturdiest trunks and branches, by beginning early, a force which they will ever afterwards retain. Branches designed to grow upwards might be made to grow downwards; limbs intended to entwine may be taught to expand—giants may be dwarfed, and the puniest plants stimulated to increase in stature. And if these changes can be effected in the vegetable kingdom, how much easier is it to change the destinies of human individuals, of an organization much more sensitive and susceptible of impression?

Good habits cannot, therefore, be too early inculcated. As the weeds of a garden grow more luxuriantly than those plants which are useful and ornamental, so do bad habits flourish more rankly and readily than sound principles and healthy practices. But as it is possible to eradicate the weeds from the most neglected gardens, so it is also possible to expel evil habits from the most obdurate natures. Bad habits, by proper discipline, can be supplanted by good ones, which will in time take root and bear abundant fruits and flowers.

You smile when you see a child trying to grasp its own shadow; but how many have been grasping shadows all their lives, and will continue to reach out and grasp as long as breath and eyesight lasts.

People who do great and heroic things are not people who neglect little duties and go about looking for adventures; they are people who are always steady in doing the duty that lies next them.

LOVE'S SPRINGTIME.

Sweetly smiles love's happy springtime
On our hearts so full of love;
And the moments fill with pleasure
As so merrily we move.

You and I are happy, Maggie,
And we shall not see dull care;
For love's sunshine sparkles brightly,
And it beameth everywhere.

Sweetly smiles love's happy springtime
On our hearts so full of love;
And the joyous moments, fleeing,
Seem with Cupid's dart to rove:
I am surely wounded, Maggie;
Cupid's dart I, helpless, feel;
And the wounds are such, my darling,
That no one save you can heal.

Every heart some other worships,
Mine has loved to follow you;
And we shall be happy, Maggie,
If you always will be true;
As the stars beam brightly, roving
Throughout heaven's immensity,
We can, dear, be just as happy
Living out life's destiny.

May we always be as happy
As our love is at this time;
May each season of our future
Pass with just as sweet a chime;
May no unseen cloud o'ertake us,
May no storm obscure the sky,
When life's springtime meekly closes,
When our summer has passed by.

Love will be the same, dear Maggie,
And no fear shall harm our way;
All our future shall be joyous,
Even to life's resting day;
Friendship should not rust nor tarnish
As we are by labour worn;
For the richest earthly jewels
Are those which our lives adorn.

S. B.

PUT TO THE PROOF.

CHAPTER XXII.

HURST WINTER decided, after spending a day in her society, that Dolores Raby was as sombre as her name. In vain he tried to engage her in conversation. That low, hissing voice of hers rarely went beyond a few syllables. Though certainly those words were always to the point and pleasantly spoken.

Beryl excused her guest, saying her heart as well as body had gone into mourning. Hurst thought it a pity that so fine a face should be disfigured by cosmetics; but when he hinted this to Beryl she smiled and said, "Dolores's love of powder was but a trifling fault in one otherwise so worthy of admiration."

He was delighted to find the new arrival could play a good game of billiards or cards, though she said she could not sing or play.

Miss Raby shrank from the idea of meeting a lot of strangers at dinner, so Beryl excused her to her guests, on plea of her early days of mourning. So Miss Raby was free to dine alone in her cosy room; and greatly to the scandal of Lady Lexton's maid, the next morning the room smelt vilely of tobacco smoke. "If ladies will smoke," she avowed, "they ought to be made to smoke mild tobacco."

The day following the arrival of Miss Raby was as delightful as wind and weather could make it. And in the full glow of the sunshine Vashti arrived, accompanied by Rex and Hero, who was looking so lovely that the housekeeper was quite taken aback; and, lifting hands and eyes, she declared to Lady Lexton's own maid that Miss Dickie would turn all the men's heads. "She is quite a picture, I assure you," said the good woman; "all glow

and glitter, like one's idea of a fairy—and quite a superior sort of person too. My lady seemed to set much store by her; and, I declare, if she is not bringing her here to us!"

True enough Lady Lexton, who rarely set foot in the servants' apartments, came into the housekeeper's cosy room. Holding Hero's hand in hers kindly, with her most gracious manner she said, "Mrs. Lowe, I want you to make my daughter's maid very happy among you; she has left home to humour the caprice of Miss Paget, who could not bear to be parted from her foster-sister. You will see she has every attention, and guard her from all annoyance, for we are tender of our old friends. Miss Paget's rooms adjoin those allotted to Miss Raby. Dickie will occupy a room between these apartments, as it is my wish that she should have her own sitting-room, as she will have to attend to both young ladies, and so will have but little leisure to spend with you. Dickie, my maid, Mrs. Smith, and my housekeeper, Mrs. Lowe."

Then Lady Lexton sailed away, leaving Hero with her new companions, who regarded her with some curiosity. Hero felt her face flush painfully, for she fancied these people did not look upon her advent among them with much favour. Mrs. Lowe was the first to speak, saying fustily, "I had no idea the pink-rooms would be wanted for you, my dear; I will give orders about them at once. Dear me, you will have your hands full with two young ladies to wait upon and work for!"

"I am to have help with the needlework. Could you recommend a clever needlewoman Mrs. Lowe?"

"I'll think about it, my dear. I don't know of any one just at present; I wish I did, for I can't endure strangers about the place."

Hero felt this was meant to be crushing, but smiled sweetly, and said it was a sentiment she, too, possessed. Then she quietly asked to be taken to Miss Paget's room to unpack, and was escorted there by Mrs. Lowe, whose stiff silk dress rustled imperiously as she preceded her up the wide stairs.

Hurst Winter passed them in the hall, and turned to favour Hero with an involuntary stare of admiration—a look that brought the hot blood to Hero's cheeks, and intensified her beauty as sunshine does the flowers. Hero had a pretty knack of blushing that she felt sometimes to be a misfortune.

When Hurst Winter saw Lady Lexton, he asked excitedly, "Who was that lovely girl in a lavender dress, with a bunch of purple pansies under her chin?"

"Oh, that is my daughter's maid, a good little soul. You must not turn her pretty head by flattery; she is an especial pet of mine."

"She is a very lovely girl—looks above her position. I should like to paint her as 'Undine' or 'Ariel.' She has such an ethereal look, one could image her anything poetic. Where did she come from?"

"A lighthouse on the Sussex coast. There is nothing romantic about her, but her name—that is Hero Dickie."

"A pretty name. I am glad it was not Sarah or Jane. I hear your daughter has arrived; you must introduce me; I am anxious to see if she comes up to Lord Lexton's description."

"Did he speak kindly of her?"

"Very. You would have been satisfied of his interest in her had you heard him."

"Vashti deserves all the good he can say of her; she has been a dear, devoted daughter to me. But here she comes!"

Lady Lexton and Hurst Winter stood by an oriel window, and Vashti, entering the room with Lord Lexton, came at once to her mother's side. She wore a soft, primrose-tinted dress, and dead gold ornaments, that were Mark's last present, and as she came the sunshine seemed to follow her through the open door. Hurst Winter's keen eyes took in the stately grace of carriage, the earnest candid eyes and Olytie head of waving golden red, and said to her mother: "She is better than beautiful, she is uncommon; she looks a queen among

women. There is a nameless grace and attractiveness about her, such as one feels suggests mind-power."

"Vashti is not clever in any unusual way, but she is bright at most things. Vashti, allow me to introduce Mr. Hurst Winter, a gentleman whose artistic triumphs are familiar to you."

"Yes, and appreciated, Mr. Winter. I am glad to know you."

Vashti held out her hand with her rare sweet smile—a smile that glorified her face as sunshine radiates the earth. Somehow, as he looked at her, Hurst Winter seemed to be inspired by sudden realization of Tennyson's "Princess," yet he could not imagine this gracious, smiling woman hating, as the princess was supposed to hate, the male sex.

"Tell me," said Vashti, while he still held her hand, and looked into her clear, calm eyes—eyes that—

"Bespoke a matchless constancy,"

"Tell me, was Queen Esther a dream-woman, or living, breathing beauty?"

"Miss Paget, she was both. She was a clumsy country girl with a wonderful face that my dream idealized into a picture; another model, miserably plain, furnished the fine form, and a kind little duchess furnished the fine apparel."

"Miss Raby—she reminds me of my pictures as to construction."

"Hush! I will not allow you to be personal; besides, I am really fond of Dolores."

Miss Raby came towards them, her sombre garments noiselessly sweeping the ground, her golden head slightly inclined forward, as though in pensive thought, her splendid eyes hidden by slight gold-rimmed glasses, that gave quite a studious look to her face.

Rex directly he saw her, sauntered to her side, and engaged her in a low conversation, that ought to have been infinitely interesting to judge by their manner. With her hand on Rex's arm, Miss Raby went out into the garden, where the sun shone and the birds sang blithely. Vashti watched them till they were lost to sight among the trees.

Just then Hero crossed the lawn in a pretty cloudy-grey, blue dress, and pointing her out admiringly, Mr. Winter said: "What a lovely creature that is! Her hair from here looks like a mass of fliegende gold. I wonder the butterflies do not mistake her for a flower. I am going to ask her to sit for a fancy portrait. Do you think she will?"

"I do not know. Like all pretty girls, there is a suspicion of vanity about her that your request may flatter; but I hope you will not turn her head. She is a good, gentle, pure-minded little thing!"

"I can quite believe that. Those eyes of hers are a true index to her nature—eyes that are as innocent as a child's. You will suggest the sitting to her for me, won't you?"

"Certainly I will; or, better still, get mamma to do so. You ought to see her in a boat on a stormy sea—she'd make an ideal picture of Grace Darling."

"A splendid idea, Miss Paget; for there is something heroic, besides her name, about her. Here comes Lady Lexton; let's hear her opinion!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE glorious First had passed, and the Priory was full of distinguished guests, who professed to be intensely interested in sport. September proved a delicious month, balmy and calm as early summer; and so far all had gone smoothly at Lexton.

A blissful sense of security had come upon the parties concerned in this domestic drama. Dolores Raby had lost the hunted, anxious look that had at first distinguished her, and now sometimes entered into the amusements of that pleasant household.

Rex had devoted himself to her so openly that when Barbara came she resigned all hope of interesting him, and fell into the background with as good a grace as she could. The disap-

pointment was hard to bear, but she was a brave girl, and hid her trouble cleverly.

Vashti felt very sorry for her, but was just then too serenely happy with her own dearly-beloved Mark to pay much attention to the little love story. She sensibly felt all would come right in the end, and so ceased to try to make Bab look beyond to the happy future in store for her.

Mark stole every available moment to spend by his darling's side, and was growing impatient of the time that must elapse before he could claim his wife.

"Christmas has always such a distant sound," he said; and Vashti smiled, pleased at his impatience.

Miss Raby now rode daily. She looked well on horseback, and rode with a fearless ease that won admiration from all who saw her. Vashti and she were great friends, and rarely seen apart; in fact, Mark grew quite jealous of their friendship, and felt grateful to Rex for taking up so much of the strange lady's time.

In the servants' hall, Hero was looked upon with suspicion, because she found such undisguised favour in the lady's eyes. Hence bore all their jealous pinpricks with good-tempered tranquillity, and went on her own uneventful way contentedly.

She had got Lady Lexton to consent to her sitting to Mr. Winter, and that gentleman found all the hours he could steal for work well employed by the two beautiful women who exercised his skill as a painter.

He felt quite sanguine of success at the coming Academy Exhibition, and took pains to depict the ladies at their best. While she sat for him, Hero bent diligently over some endless lace-work, and discouraged all attempts that he made to lead her into conversation.

This modest diffidence on her part pleased Lady Lexton, and interested Harriet, who, beyond all things, admired modesty in a pretty woman.

Hero was in constant attendance upon Miss Raby, Vashti dispensing with her services in a happy independent way natural to her. After a time Lady Lexton got a little maid for Vashti from the village, and Hero was at liberty to devote all her time to Miss Raby, who appeared a most exacting mistress.

Many were the long, loving letters Hero wrote to her patient old father at the light-house; and very welcome those letters were to the lonely old man, who received them with so much pleasure and destroyed them with such tender regret. After destroying them he would light his pipe with a sigh, and tell himself he was a selfish old fool to wish his darling back to the safe shelter of her father's love.

Miss Trail went oftener to see him; and always took some delicacy, and stayed to chat awhile about the story of the house of Pagets. The Warren was shut up, Peggy only going there from the Naze a few times a week to air the house and keep all things in readiness for the return of her young mistress, who she declared would, sooner or later, fly back and take refuge in the old home-nest.

The autumn gales were many and serious on that coast. There was a report abroad that the old lighthouse was shaky; but Tom Dickie pooh-poohed the idea, and lived on with happy faith in the care of Him who careth for the fate of a sparrow. Nightly the lighthouse lamps cast their lurid warning over the seething sea; and Tom sat alone, longing for the bright face of his dear little daughter, and trying to picture her in the new life that she told him was happy for all its danger and uncertainty. With unselfish devotion he had given her up to new ties; but his heart was often heavy on her account. He submitted with meek patience to his loneliness, and tried to believe all things tended to some good end, even though he was left out of count, and allowed to eat out his heart with loneliness. Tom's love for his only child was more like a mother's than a man's in its entire self-forgetfulness. Hero sent him all the new books and papers; so with these and his pipe he beguiled the long days and waited.

In the society paper he read much of Carl Gonthier, who had made such a stir as an actor. He read that he was received in the highest society, and that the reigning beauties made an idol of him. In one of these papers he found a portrait of Carl as "Orlando," and was bound to confess he looked the part to perfection. It was a satisfaction to the old man to know that Carl was too much employed in his profession to have leisure to annoy the folks at Lexton Priory—for Tom dreaded his visitation for Hero, and feared it might make mischief for her with Percy, whom the old man loved as a son.

One day there came a long letter from Hero that destroyed the delusive calm. It told of Carl Gonthier's frequent visits to the Priory, which were happily of brief duration; that he was made very welcome by Lord Lexton, who had conceived a great liking for the clever fellow since he had been charmed by his genius as an actor. Hero told her father both she and Percy had avoided him by the plea of Miss Raby's illness, which kept her to her room, and of course kept Hero employed in attending to her supposed mistress. She also told of Vashti's unhappy looks during these visits, and of Mark's gloomy jealousy of the actor—a jealousy, she declared, that was not without a certain foundation.

These tidings made Tom very unhappy, for he did not like to hear of his darling's Eden being subject to the tail of the serpent; and awaked wish came to the old man that he had carried out his threat, and dashed the daring spy to death on the rocks beneath the light-house.

It was a wicked wish, and passed quickly; but, like all evil things, it left a gloom behind.

Most of the guests had deserted the Priory; only Major Paget, Barbara Rouse, Vashti, and Miss Raby remained.

Harriet Winter had gone to his beloved studio to finish the works of art begun during that pleasant holiday time at Lexton. Mark Frost often ran down, for it was an easy distance from London; and to his delight Carl Gonthier also came to the place that contained Mark's dearest earthly treasure.

Lady Lexton kept her bright looks and happy ways. Lord Lexton declared he grew more fond of her every day.

Thanks to her husband's generosity, Beryl had been able to repay Rex the five hundred pounds that Carl Gonthier had demanded as hush-money, and she was now laying by a sum that would secure her son and his wife a happy home at last.

It was arranged that they should go in the early spring; but Beryl dreaded the parting, and, lulled by a false security, would gladly have kept them with her always; but Rex was more wise, and advised her to get the young people away as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, just as their plans were ripe, Miss Raby fell ill.

In vain Beryl prayed that the risk should be run and a doctor sent for.

Neither Hero or any of those in the secret would agree with her, for all fancied that the illness was but slight and would pass away without ill-effects.

This delicacy kept Hero and her patient prisoners, so that when next Carl Gonthier came to the Priory there was no fear of meeting him.

It was a wild, wintry morning, and the Sabbath bells were ringing, when he drove up to the Priory, and was cordially received by Lord Lexton, who was confined to the house by a slight attack of gout.

A cheery fire was burning in the library—a picturesque room famous for the beauty of its oak carving.

Lord Lexton sat before the fire alone, for all the rest of the folks had gone to church. He welcomed Carl heartily, for he was feeling a little tired of his own society.

Lady Lexton had begged to be allowed to remain at home with him, but he would

not bear of it, knowing she enjoyed the walk to the church in such bright, boisterous weather.

"I'm glad to see you, my boy! I am all alone, you see. Draw your chair up to the fire and tell me what the world is doing; it's so long since I heard any club gossip."

Carl Gonthier sat down, and after helping himself to sherry and bitten, poured out a whole flood of intelligence—gossip that delighted his host.

The tall trees blew to and fro in front of the window, making a dirge-like sound, and the wind howled dismally, though the sun kept its cheerful smile, and the heavens of blue above was flecked by frolicsome little wind-clouds.

"More like March than November," said Carl, as he drew nearer the fire, inquiring after the health of the whole household.

"All well, except Miss Raby," said Lord Lexton. "She has been very ill of late; fortunately she has a devoted nurse in that pretty little soul, Hero Dickie."

Carl started, then said, "I had no idea Dickie's daughter was here; who was, as you say, a pretty little soul."

As they spoke there came a gentle knock at the door, and Hero entered, looking very lovely in a tasteful crimson dress. Lady Lexton had given her. She started at sight of Carl, and would have left the room had not Lord Lexton said, "Come in, Dickie, don't let Mr. Gonthier frighten you away. What did you want?"

"I came for the second volume of this book, please, my lord."

"Get it then, my girl; you know where to find it."

Hero, with heightened colour, placed the steps in front of one of the book-cases, and was about to ascend when Carl courteously offered to get the book for her. When he gave the book to her he asked very kindly after her father, and then inquired after Miss Raby, although he had known that lady all his life.

Hero fastened out a reply, and fled from his sight as though scared. When she entered the apartment allotted to Miss Raby, she was white and trembling. Closing the door sharply behind her she knelt down by the bed, and baring her face in the clothes, began to sob as if her heart would break.

Two delicate white hands drew her pretty head nearer, and a voice full of loving concern said, softly, "Hush, my wee woman, what has upset you so? Speak to me, dear, your gods hurt me."

"I am foolish to be so upset; but I have been so startled. In the library, with Lord Lexton, I met Carl Gonthier, and his order eyes seemed to look into my very soul, and read our secret. I am afraid of being off my guard. I showed the alarm his unexpected appearance caused me; for he looked so wickedly malignant, and smiled in his hold, bad way."

"My darling, he has often been here before, and no harm has come of it. Do not upset yourself, the matter will manage him. For my sake, you must be brave. I shall soon be better, please Heaven; then Rex will conclude the arrangements, and you and I will leave all this misery behind and go far away over the blue sea to begin a new life in a new country. Only keep hope and look ahead—danger disappears if confronted by a fearless face. I shall be well enough to travel in the spring, and Rex has promised to manage to get us all down to the Naze for Christmas; then we can persuade Dickie to give up his lonely life and follow us to the new, bright home."

Hero dried her eyes and smiled dimly; the prospect was full of charm, but she knew their fate hung on a thread.

Lately she had got to mistrust the future that had been so lovingly planned for them, and, with all a woman's unreasoning instinct, felt there would be more anxiety, dread, and danger to be borne before the time of peace and joy should come. But the loved Percy too well to wish to gloom the bright visions that made captivity endurable. So she said she had been stupid, kissed him, and arose to put fresh fuel on the fire, and to peep out at the wind-swept

grounds, then up to the widespread white wing of air that drifted so rapidly across the changing sky.

The tasteful chamber, with its sparkling fire, bright drapery, and the noble Byronic face on the pillow made a pleasant picture.

Hero's eyes were too misty to see anything but a blurred outline of the outward scene. Her heart was dull within her; a thousand fears fought with her, beating down her strength, her faith, her hopefulness—fears that were not for herself, but one who was far dearer.

Suddenly the sound of the wind, as it swept round the grand old house, recalled the light house and her father. She said, with her lovely, misty eyes still turned to the sky,—

"Do you hear the wind? Is it not rough? I wonder what sort of weather they are having at Balmfield? I never hear the wind without thinking of the dad. Just now I could almost fancy I could hear him speaking above the uproar of the elements. Poor old man, he must be lonely!"

"I was selfish to let you leave him, Hero."

"No, you were not, my love! He knows your need of me; and we are bound by a holier tie than even that which binds father and daughter. I can see your sister coming; she will be vexed to find that man here. I will slip down and prepare her to see him."

In a second Hero's light, flying steps bore her down the softly-carpeted stairs, out of the bright hall into the crisp keen air.

Hero's soft, golden hair was blown into her eyes, and her skirts floated out like a balloon about her.

Vashti smiled at sight of the little, flying figure, and as it neared her, said,—

"Why, Hero, you look like a danger-signal in that wind-tossed crimson garment! What is the matter? Speak quickly, we shall not be alone a second."

"I am a danger-signal, dear, for I came out to warn you against meeting the enemy in ambush. Carl Gunther is here, and has seen me!"

A heavy look crossed Vashti's face as she said, in a tone of sharp pain,—

"He here again? Oh, why can't he leave us in peace? Thanks for telling me, child. Now hasten back to the house. You have no wrap, and this little old wind is cruel enough to blight even so sweet a blossom as our Hero. But all that will wait until I have seen you."

Just then Rex, who had lingered behind to speak to a groom about a sick horse, came up, and putting one of Hero's soft curls in his hair,—

"Well, sea-foam, did you come out in hopes of being blown over hill and dale to the light-house tower to see the old father?"

"No; I came out to say the male professional beauty has arrived."

"Is Gunther here? Oh, hang it! The fellow is enough to try the patience of an angel. Since he has taken to silver handles, long hair, and the dress of Oscar Wilde, he is unbearable. Mark will be here presently; he will send me to that effect, and by all the holy homages I swing along as if the devil has been power in that spare body of his."

They all passed. Hero came in directly different dress, and with a brief, but hearty greeting grasped hands with Vashti, and said to Rex,—

"You got my telegram, I suppose, old fellow? I ought to be a good deal better."

"Yes, dear boy; I was mentioning the fact to Vashti. We have just come from church."

Vashti smiled, and said, shaking her head, roughly,—

"I have; but that old fellow, Mark, has been for a long while, and just felt in with me as the folks do at our church, holding his books as though he had been."

"I heard the benediction from the porch and enjoyed a grand walk. I wish you had been with me, old fellow."

"So do I, major; but I was busy till the small hours burning the midnight oil. You know now I have got on the ever-revolving

wheel of fortune I dare not stop, but I mean to claim my reward for so much work soon."

He clasped a hand over the one that lay so confidently on his arm, and smiled into his lady-love's clear eyes.

A beautiful flush had risen to Vashti's face—a flush that faded at sight of the momentary pain in her cousin's eyes.

"Take my books, and hurry in, Hero. Wait for me in the hall; you can take my jacket and books to my room."

"Yes, miss! said Hero humbly, hastily leaving them—a lovely vision of gold and crimson."

"I think that girl gets more lovely every time I see her," said Mark, who had given the girl a kind nod and smile; "but she does not look so well; she has a harassed, hunted look I can't understand."

"Nonsense, old chap, 'tis all your imagination. The girl's only troubles are too many admirers. All the men about the place are in love with her, so of course all the women folk hate her," said Rex, impatiently.

Mark turned to Vashti and said,—

"If you are not tired, dear, come for a walk with me; my head feels fairly dazed with too much thinking, and this breeze is just the thing to clear the cobwebs out of one's brain."

"I am not at all tired, I shall be glad to come, Mark. Rex, take this wrap in, and tell Hero to get my blue dress out. Lord Lexton will be sure to bully me if I appear at dinner in this dress."

The dress in question was a soft cashmere of severe simplicity, and Lord Lexton liked to see his new daughter gorgeous as an Eastern queen.

Vashti and Mark walked on in silence, till they came to a broad path that led through the wood.

The wind drifted the dead leaves about them, and the frosty sunshine shone brightly through the bare trees.

A few birds flew about with a doleful twitter.

Vashti stooped and picked up a handful of dead leaves, and stood still a second to sort them, the sunshine on her fair, tranquil face, that looked fairer by contrast with the rich furs she wore.

One leaf she found red as blood, another of delicate baby gold, another as russet as her own bright head, another spotted like the wings of a moth, another half-crisp and green, the other half shrivelled and dead, withered out of all beauty.

Mark took this from her hand, saying,—

"The others are pretty, but this is not; it looks not like grand old age or noble and natural decay, but like a young life blasted."

He threw it away, then stooping over her, said,—

"Where is my welcome, Vashti?"

"In my heart, Mark!"

"Bring it to your lips, and let me taste if it is sweet. Kiss me, my queen."

While he held her close, and only the sunbeams peeped at them—the sunbeams and a sad brown bird, who had known the troubles of mortality, and perhaps pitied the girl who was so blindly embracing her fate. Mark said,—

"I fell asleep at my work last night, I live, in my dingy chamber, and I dreamt you stole in my window with the moonbeams, and crept to my side with such pitiful, prayerful eyes, and said: 'I must leave you, Mark—leave you without word or sign; but Heaven will watch and give me victory over all who now stand between us, only give me love and faith.' Then I felt your lips pressed close to mine, and you vanished, taking the light with you, leaving me in darkness. And I awoke to find my lamp burnt out, and the moon hidden by a big black cloud. I knew life would be as the world without light if I lost you."

"Dear old man, do not fear; I shall grow old by your side I hope. Yet if anything should part us for a time, I wonder if you would give me what I asked in your dreams—love and faith! Ah! I fear not, I fear not; for jealousy

spoils the noblest part of you. Come let us walk on; 'tis chilly here."

CHAPTER XXIV.

When Vashti and Mark returned, bright and invigorated by their brisk walk, they separated in the hall—Vashti to go and dress, Mark to seek his hostess, whom he found enthroned amid a heap of silken cushions in a wide window-seat. At her side, in indolent grace, sat Carl, amusing her by a description of a recent private view at the "Grosvenor." By his hostess's kind permission he smoked a tiny scented cigarette, and now and then whistled, clear and sweet as a flute, the refrain of some new music.

At sight of Mark he smiled a slow, scornful smile; then rose and made some pleasant and discriminating remarks upon a speech of Mark's that had made a great stir—a speech all fire and earnestness—and Mark, though he did so dislike this man, could not feel flattered by his hearty appreciation. The young Q.C. was charmed by the interest Carl took in a case of attempted murder—a case intricate in the extreme, and requiring great detective skill.

When Vashti entered—a vision of blue and gold—Mark was standing in the true-at-home English fashion, saying in his sonorous voice,—

"I hold the old saying true, that 'murder will out.' Look at the case in point. Zealous friends shield the culprit. Love, the mighty master of human deeds—love could not save him; discovery came quick and sure. I hold with the old law given in divine writ—a life for a life. I have no pity for the man whose headstrong fury hurls another unprepared into the presence of his Creator. 'Tis not the loss of life so much as the possible loss of pardon. A man hurled out of life with his sins hot upon him is different to one prepared, by the divine compassion of sickness, to lose his hold on earthly things. A murderer has not only his victim's life to answer for, but the possible loss of soul. So let the man die who has deserved death; for death is, after all, a less punishment than a life in shadow."

While he spoke, Vashti stood as though turned to stone, feeling Carl's cruelly scrutinizing eyes upon her.

"A Daniel come to judgment," said Carl, lightly. "Only hear him, Miss Paget! He declares that if an own brother had committed the dire offence called murder he would bound him off to prison as cheerfully as one calls a lad to school!"

Vashti's pale face took a deeper pallor—her great pathetic eyes looked into her lover's flushed face; and, slowly sinking into a seat by the fire, she said,—

"Judgment is mine, with the Lord. Ah! Mark! you have not had this sentiment you call justice brought home to you yet. Wait; never be positive of what you would do in any case till experience has shown you how it comes natural to act in an emergency. Thanks Mr. Gunther,—"this was said to Carl, who, with his rare tact, seeing the strained horror of her eyes, gave her a screen of parson's feathers to hide her face, pretending pleasantly that he thought the fire would spoil her complexion.

No one noticed Lady Lexton; her eyes were turned to the fast-glooming landscape, her hands clasped tightly in her lap, her bosom rising and falling in quick yet halting breath. Conquering her emotion, she said, in a strange hoarse voice,—

"To-day the parson preached of pardon promised to all sinners. Christ pitied them. So do I; for sin brings its own punishment. I hear the bell, my lord; let's go to the dining-room. I am positively famished."

But though she spoke of being famished, it must have been a hunger of the heart for rest; for but little passed those perfect lips; and Vashti felt sorry that her lover had brought such a strange horror to her mother's eyes, for she knew that her mother, after hearing his hard



[WELCOMED FOR LOVE'S SAKE.]

words, would not consent to let him share their secret; and until he did, she felt she dared not be his wife.

After the silent meal was ended, Lady Lexton lay down on a couch with a book; and Vashti looked out at the first flakes of snow she had seen that season; and as the snow-drift deepened beneath the window, she said to herself, softly, "Snow-flakes always seem to me the cast-off sins of purified souls—sins that are cast back upon the earth from whence they spring to mingle with earthly uncleanness—and show us how Heaven-sent things are spoiled by earthly contact."

"What is my wise woman whispering to herself about?" said a well-loved voice; and Mark, with his tender protecting smile, was beside her, his strong hands clasped upon her shoulder.

"I am not a wise woman, Mark; instead, I am a timid, doubting soul, that has taken a man as master, whose judgment I am conceited enough to believe lacks that softness that should temper strength. In fact, Mark, I fancy you are too hard and cold in judgment. I should be afraid to tell you my sins, and still more afraid to submit those of my friends to your untender mercies."

"Let us have grave discussion to another and less gloomy day, dearest, and come with me into the library. There is a jolly fire there, and I have drawn a chair to the hearth, and want you to let me read you a favourite book of mine. Come, pet, that fellow Gonther will be back directly. Leave him to Rex; I see so little of you now, and have so much to tell you, dear."

Vashti allowed him to lead her into the library, where, as he said, her welcome had been prepared. Then he made her sit down, and taking a seat on the rug at her feet, he laid his head on her lap, and told her to pet him, for his head ached.

Vashti did as desired, till he began to read to her from a book of noble inspirations. After

awhile his voice ceased, and his head grew heavy, and he slept. The firelight flickered on his fine face, and the fair but sorrowful one bent above it.

A sabbath calm of silence was upon the house, it seemed like the enchanted palace of the sleeping beauty. Even the big clock ticked drowsily, and Vashti looked into the fire-glow, and tried to conjure up prophetic pictures of a possible future.

Gradually the dusk deepened, and the place was all in shadow. A soft footfall disturbed her; looking up she saw Hero come gliding out of the shadows—Hero, with a scared look on her innocent childish face.

"Oh! Hero, how you startled me, child! What is the matter?"

"If you please, Miss Vashti, Miss Raby does not seem so well; can you come to her?"

"Not now, Hero—speak softly. Go to mamma; she is alone in the morning room. Do not be frightened; if it is the faintness, you know what to do; there is really no need for fear. Your love alarms you—you poor, timid little ghost."

"Oh! I can't help it, miss; it seems so awful not to have a doctor at such a time!"

Hero wrung her hands, but spoke softly.

"Foolish child! Do I not tell you there is no need for anxiety. I ought to know; and you may be sure I should do what is best. Do not cry, child; it will call forth comment!"

Hero wiped her eyes, and quickly turned to go.

"I will be with you in an hour, Hero!"

"Thanks, Miss Paget; you won't forget, will you? I get nervous alone."

"Forget!" said Vashti bitterly. "Am I likely to forget?"

Hero crossed the room, her hands to her eyes—crossed with noiseless tread, a little shadowy shape, that the fire-glow followed lovingly.

Someone stood back on the threshold to let

her pass, then with steps as noiseless as her own passed on, and stood opposite Vashti, who bent lovingly over her sleeping lover.

She started as a low, clear voice said, in a distinct undertone: "Who is Miss Raby? And why, if she is ill, should she not have advice? What new mystery are you hugging to your heart, Miss Paget? Is the secret shared by this slumbering Samson?"

Vashti felt the blood congeal about her heart at the sound of Carl Gonther's voice.

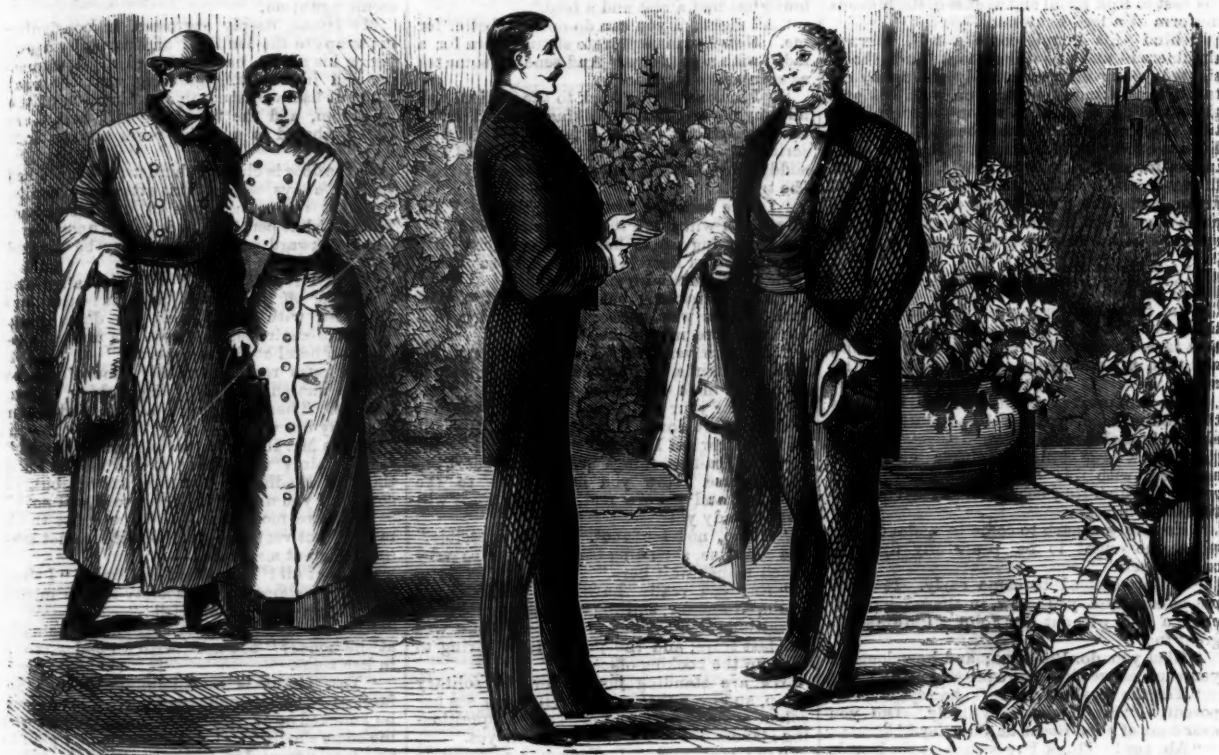
(To be continued.)

THERE is nothing nobler in man than courage; and the only way to be courageous is to be clean-handed and hearted, to be able to respect ourselves and face our record.

APPEARANCES seldom ought to determine our judgment. When the honour, probity, or reputation of some one is the matter in question, it ought not to be pronounced without a thorough investigation of the subject; and in that case, suspicions are never certainties.

PRECARIOUS and uncertain gains are usually as speedily dissipated. Try, if possible, to save a portion of whatever you receive, to lay by. The improvidence of literary individuals has often been a subject of reproach to the profession, and not without reason.

TEMPER imprints its mark upon the countenance and speedily reveals the character of the disposition which lurks behind it. Being a growing and vigorous power, it gradually overcomes every obstacle that stands in the way of its observation. It wrinkles the brow, lowers the eyebrows, bends the curve of the mouth, and points the lips when it is of a disagreeable, selfish nature. Cultivate beauty of the soul, for the course of feeling engendered by a kind and generous character will always give life and permanent animation to all the lines of the face.



[AT THE "RED LION"—A MYSTERIOUS MEETING.]

NOVELLETTE.]

HOW I FOUND HER.

CHAPTER I.

TWO WOMEN.

"FORHAM! all change here!" shouts the guard, rousing me from the uneasy slumbers into which I have been jolted by eight hours of railway travelling.

Am I, then, the only passenger to this dark, dreary, deserted station, on this dark, dreary, September night?

Not quite, it appears, as I let down the window and look for a porter to take charge of my traps. I see a lady step lightly from the adjoining carriage and engage that functionary in earnest conversation.

Apparently there is only one porter at this benighted place. So I also descend, and slowly approach, in order to secure the reversion of his services. Thus, as the lady's voice, though low, "an excellent thing in woman," is unusually clear and distinct, I cannot avoid overhearing what she says.

"No cab at all to be had to-night? Are you sure?"

"Quite sure, ma'am."

"But how is that? I never had any difficulty in getting one here before."

"Why you see all the cabs belong to the 'George,' and there's a ball going on there to-night for young Mr. Escourt's coming of age, and you couldn't get one of them cabs—ah! not for double fare and a pint of beer in—"

Pleasant hearing for me, with five or six miles of *terra incognita* between me and my destination, and a heavy portmanteau, gun-case, hat-box, and rugs to boot!

"What shall I do?" exclaims the young lady. "What am I to do? I must get to Maple Hill to-night, and I cannot possibly walk."

"No, miss! More particular as the road's partly under water since these here rains," assents the porter cheerfully.

This gets interesting.

"Excuse me," I interpose, advancing, "but I think I heard you mention the place to which I am bound. Do you mean to say," to the porter, "that I can get no conveyance to Maple Hill?"

The lady starts, draws her ulster more closely round her, and readjusts the veil she had put aside while speaking to the man.

"Not as I know of, sir!" is the encouraging reply. "You see all the cabs have been engaged for a week beforehand for this ball to-night. It's just what the men like, loafing about, first to one house then to another, and as much beer going as you please."

"And is there no omnibus—no vehicle of any sort?"

"There's a carrier's cart, but that started two hours ago," says my friend, sardonically.

I feel in the highest degree out of temper and aggrieved. I seem already to have spent an eternity, waiting at junctions and crawling along cross-country lines, and now that the end of the railway journey is at last reached, I am stopped short altogether!

"Well, I must go to this 'George' of yours and see for myself whether anything can be done," I observe, after a moment's consideration. "Just get my traps together, my good fellow, and show me the way out," then turning to the young lady, I add—"If I can get hold of any sort of vehicle I hope you will allow me to offer you a seat in it, as our destination seems to be the same?"

She hesitates a little; she is evidently most unwilling to adopt the suggestion; but at last she replies, in those deliciously clear, soft tones,—

"Thank you very much. I seem to have no alternative."

"Indeed, I do not think you have."

Perhaps my tone involuntarily betrays a

little soreness at her mode of accepting my overture, for she adds impulsively as I am about to turn away,—

"Oh! I did not mean to be ungracious; only I so much regret your having a stranger as it were forced upon you—and—and we can not tell what inconvenience it may lead to."

"I will run all risks," I reply, charmed out of my ill-temper by her pretty earnestness, but a little puzzled by her mysterious forebodings. "One is always glad of a companion in misfortune, you know."

Then I follow the porter through the booking office, receive sundry unintelligible directions, and start on my journey of discovery.

Forham is not so large or so busy a town that its chief inn is difficult to find out, especially on this important night. I soon found myself on the steps of the "George Hotel," quite brilliant and unmistakable, with its gala garb of scarlet foot-cloth, striped awning, and many coloured lamps. A ball is evidently a great event in these regions, and one to be made the most of in every way.

Hours of primitive simplicity prevail in Forham. It is barely ten o'clock, yet carriages, private and hired, are driving up; amateur link boys are shouting, tumbling over each other, and struggling to open and shut doors, while ladies are alighting, with much gathering up of rainbow-hued garments, and many deprecatory shudders at the muddy wheels and dripping rails.

I enter the hall of the inn, and at once am made to feel myself a nuisance and an anachronism. What earthly business has a damp, mud-bespattered bird-of-passage in the "George" on such a night? Everyone is much too busy to take any notice of me, and while I am vainly trying to get attended to, a carriage sets down a party of evidently exceptional importance, and I stand aside for a moment to let the new arrivals pass.

An elderly lady and gentleman come first: she tall and angular, gorgeous in green velvet and

diamonds—be round and rubicund, and doing his best to look jovial and at ease in the hideous uniform of a lord-lieutenant.

Behind this couple come a tall, narrow-shouldered and aquiline-nosed and short-sighted young man, faultlessly got up by his tailor, but in much tribulation with his eyes, and on his arm, a vision—a concentration—an embodiment of all beauty.

I am conscious of floating lace, and of shining satin, and gleaming pearls, and silken, flower-crowned hair. Something requires arranging in the glistening draperies, and she stops a moment, turning slightly towards the spot to which I have retreated, and then—

"A face flashed like a symbol on my face,
And shook with silent rapture brain and heart."

I am transfixed—subjugated. There is something in the world, for one wild moment, but that face, and myself. Only for one moment, and then my wandering senses are calmly recalled.

"We are most preposterously early," says the young man, pulling impatiently at an almost invisible moustache.

He has a little difficulty, either naturally or acquired, with this "ah," and consequently words in which they occur have a fatal fascination for him.

"How very absurd to come to a dance just when one ought to be peacefully drinking one's sherry."

"We are obliged to come early. It would not be etiquette, you know, in these regions to open a ball without Sir John. I think it's great fun."

"Glad you do, Emma; and how long do you suppose we shall be required to stay?"

"Till the very last dance," she replies, composedly. "Sir Roger, most likely. Did you ever hear of 'Sir Roger de Coverley'?"

"Ah, yes! Think I've seen it on the boards somewhere. Daresay I can make it out with you," he adds, trying to throw a sentimental inflection into those last words, and dropping his voice with an expressive glance which makes my fingers tingle to punch his head.

By this time the dress is adjusted, and they cross the hall together, and disappear up the wide staircase. And I stop to pick up a japonica blossom, bright but scentless, which has fallen from her hair, and hide it, like a fool, as I am, in my pocket-book.

I believe others belonging to the same party follow—young men, and maidens, good-looking and well-dressed. But for them I have neither eyes nor ears. I have, indeed, almost forgotten the object of my being there at all, and I am rather astonished when, during a lull in the arrivals, some one has leisure to inquire what I want, and the host himself condescends to give me an audience.

"Let you have a close carriage to Maple Hill? No, sir; indeed I couldn't to-night—not if you offered me any money. My girls have all got their work cut out for them, bringing and taking away. I wish I'd a dozen more!"

"But what am I to do? I can't walk."

"My advice would be, sir, if you'll excuse me, to take a bed here to-night and go on to-morrow morning. It's a nasty night for a journey."

What! spend a whole night with that confounded band swaying in my ears, and the maddening knowledge that she—my goddess—is within a few feet of me, dancing with unnumbered favoured mortals, but as inaccessible to me as though she dwelt "on the remotest mountain of Cathay?"

No, I will perish—I mean walk—first. Besides, there is my poor fellow-traveller whom I have in some sort pledged myself to assist.

"Quite impossible," I reply, decidedly. "Not to be thought of for a moment. I suppose there is some kind of open conveyance you can let me have? That will be better than nothing."

"Well, sir," anxiously, "there's the waggone-ette that's gone to the barracks for the officers—nobody else will want that to-night. You

might have it in an hour or so, sir, when the horse has had a rest and a feed."

"All right; if you can do nothing better for me. Now I want a private sitting-room for a lady, with a good fire. And send up some tea as soon as we come in."

So I make my way back to the station, and find my poor Ariadne walking up and down the platform, as fast and far as the circumstances shelter will permit; gusts of wind and sudden drifts of rain meeting her every time she turns.

"I have done the best I can, though I am afraid you will think that best very bad."

I say, going up to her, with immense pity for the slender flexible figure, looking so utterly unfit to contend with such a night.

"There's nothing but a waggone-ette to be had in this wilderness; but with rugs and umbrellas we may make it."

"You are very, very kind," she answers—pride, gratitude, and embarrassment contending in her most expressive voice.

"But for your kindness I don't know what I should have done. I never gave a thought to the hall when I started this morning."

"Well, bad as things are they might have been worse. Now you must come to the 'George' and have a rest, for the horse will not be ready yet."

"Oh no, no! I cannot. It is impossible," she exclaims, shrinking back. "I had so very much rather wait here."

"But you really have no alternative," I answer, smiling. "There is not even a waiting-room by way of shelter. (Hurs was the last train, and the porter is preparing to lock up the booking-office.)"

We are standing just below the solitary lamp, and even through the veil I can see her colour come and go, and meeting the questioning glances of two dark, thoughtful eyes.

"Che said, said," I observe, preparing to lead the way. "You have absolutely no choice. Here, porter, when you have looked up bring my luggage to the George. You have none, I think?"

"None at all," she answers rather flitting. And as I hold the door open for her departure the young lady performs a passage through.

CHAPTER II.

My unknown companion yields to the inevitable with a good grace, and she walks lightly along the dim, muddy streets and narrow, uneven pavements, with the firm, dry step of one accustomed to exercise.

She talks with the ease and simplicity of one accustomed to society. And by the time I stand once more at the entrance to the George we have discussed (for him, its neighbourhood and its natives, almost like old friends.

Only when I attempt to direct the conversation to Maple Hill and its inhabitants she either relapses into cold reserve, or changes the subject.

While I am looking for some one to show us to the sitting-room I speak, wheels are again heard outside, and a young man runs up the steps and into the hall, and a lady follows him.

"Hallo, Johnson! He calls, cheerily, to the approaching landlady, 'Have you got many people here?' Has the 'Castle' party come yet?"

"Surely I know that voice! Of course! How absurd of me to have doubted even for a moment, and I should be true to the fact."

"Why, Heron?" I exclaim, as the hat and overcoat are hastily flung off, and the hand some face and figure fully revealed. "I thought I knew your voice. Heron."

But my companion turns white as snow, and shrinks into the shade of an unlighted recess, putting one trembling hand on my arm to draw me back beside her.

"Pray, pray! do not speak to him now!" she falters. "I knew how very strange this must seem. But I implore you—"

I hesitate, startled and perplexed by her extreme agitation.

My friend, deeply engrossed in consigning his wraps to the landlord and carefully drawing on his gloves, has not heard my stammering and interrupting greeting, and the next moment has vanished in the direction of the ball-room, and the trembling girl and I are being ushered to a sitting-room on the first floor.

As the door is closed behind us, "I cautioned you," she says, with a faint attempt to smile, "against taking compassion on a stranger. You see what perplexities it brings upon you—what awkward positions you may be hurried into!"

"And I repeat that I will run all risks. Now take off that cloak and that—they are saturated with damp—and sit down here. This arm-chair looks a shade less uncomfortable than hotel chairs in general!"

She looks round anxiously, doubtfully, as though unseeing faces might be lurking in dim corners. Then, making, with a vain endeavour to steady her voice,—

"Does Mr. Heron know that you are here?"

"Certainly not—how should he? I did think of sending to let him know; but, of course, if you dislike my doing so I will not!"

"You are most kind—and you must think my conduct very strange. But if it is not asking too great a sacrifice—"

"Not at all!" I answer, laughing. "I shall have quite enough of his society in the month I am to spend at Maple Hill!"

"Oh! you are going to stay there—actually at the house?" she asks, with an odd anxiety in her voice.

"Yes, Heron is an old chum of mine. In fact, we were at Rugby together. This season he knocked up against me in town, and offered me some shooting. I was uncommonly glad to see him again, for I always liked him immensely, and I don't know how we came to lose sight of each other for such a long time."

I purposely linger over these remarks, but she makes no reply, and her face is averted.

All that I can see is the restless movement of her hand against the hard, black shiny surface of the horse-hair covered couch on which she sits. She has drawn off her gloves, and I notice that it is a very pretty hand, slender and white.

There is a peculiar old-fashioned ring on one finger—too large a ring for that little hand—with a crest deeply cut in its dark blue stone.

Standing close by the head of the couch, I glance keenly down at the ring. Yes, it was sure of it it is. Heron's own; his own long-billed, long-legged namesake.

Taken in conjunction with her emotion at seeing him—suspicious!

"Why will you not take off these wet things?" I repeat, presently. "There will soon be no time to do so."

Then she rises and obediently lays aside her ulster and hat, which are indeed dripping with rain, and gives a sigh of mingled weariness and relief, as she sinks into the chair that I have wheeled up to the fireplace.

She is young—apparently little more than twenty—and a lady, though travelling alone at so late an hour. Her dress is studiously plain; a dark, simply made silk, a long cloak of some soft heavy material, a small black hat and thick veil. She is neither tall nor short; too slender for perfect symmetry, too pale for youthful freshness; her light brown hair is twisted into a large knot at the back of her head. Her fine, clearly marked eyebrows are slightly contracted, giving a somewhat stern expression to her face. Her large, dark, speaking eyes alone can be called really beautiful; yet, taken altogether, there is a far more interesting than many that are faultless in features.

She seems too much preoccupied by real anxiety to feel the singularity of our position—two total strangers, ignorant even of each other's names, sitting by an hotel fire, and looking forward to a midnight drive!

For my own part I am young enough, and

accustomed to a sufficiently monotonous life, to find the situation interesting. No doubt I should have felt it still more so; but that my thoughts will keep straying and that passing vision of—

"All beauty that is thrown in womanhood."

How shabby it was of Heron not to tell me of this hall! He might have brought me with him.

The clattering entrance of a tea-tray, with all the old-fashioned accompaniments, even to the "hissing urn," breaks up my reverie, and the stranger comes forward to make tea, with a fitting blush and smile which wonderfully light up her quiet face.

Through the open door came the strains of the "Och! Turbine" waltzes, and the tread of many feet keeping time to time.

"It is so odd to think what a different scene there is so close to me! Would not you like to be taking part in it? I ask, as the tantalizing sounds grow more distinct.

"Not here—not in England," says the young lady, quietly. "I certainly don't know many English people; but I fancy their genius is not for society."

"But surely you are English?" I ask in amazement, so pure in her accent, so free from any trace of foreign timidity in her manner.

"My father was. But I lived abroad till his death, and society seemed to me a pleasant footing there."

At this point our conversation is cut short by the announcement that the wagonette is ready.

"I have been thinking," says my companion, hesitatingly, when she is arrayed for the drive, "that since you are an old friend of Mr. Heron's it will surely be better for you to let him know that you are here, and return with him in the brougham?"

"And allow you to drive to Maple Hill alone, at this time of night, through this detestable weather? What can you think of me?"

"I must have done so had you not been here—if I got there in any way," she answers, with a sigh.

"But I am here, and if you please we will carry out the programme," I tell her. And we go down together to the hall.

Fortunately the rain has ceased, but it is a wild, cold, gloomy night. The wind has risen and drives heavy masses of clouds across the moon. The horse is restless, and a little delay occurs while the ostler goes to his head, and I try to shelter my companion from the stormy wind.

Whilst waiting, we both involuntarily raise our eyes to the long, lighted windows of the Assembly Room, just above. As we do so the ostler one, leading to a covered balcony filled with plants, is thrown open, and a lady steps out. I know her in a moment; "There is none like her," none. The brilliant light of the ball-room, streamers out, and irradiates her beautiful head, as she stands motionless amongst the flowers.

"This is cruel," says a man's voice, behind her; and my friend Heron's handsome face appears above her shoulder. "This is most unjust. Here have I come from Maple Hill through this thrice accursed weather, solely for this one waltz, which you promised to keep for me a fortnight ago!"

"There must be some extraordinary blunder," says another voice—the voice of the young man who was with her in the hall. "I assure you, Heron, Miss Corbet is engaged to me."

"Miss Corbet is this true? Or am I under the painful necessity of wronging my best friend for slandering you?"

"You are under no necessity at all," replies the girl, scornfully; "but that of dancing with some one else. I believe I did promise this waltz to each of you—and so I will dance it with neither."

And as she turns away—proud, wilful, radiant—in the light and music of the crowded room, the ostler lets the horse's head go, and we drive away into the gloomy night.

The girl opposite to me leans back in the

furthest corner of the carriage, as though shrinking out of sight and hearing of the group in the balcony.

CHAPTER III.

"AS OTHER STRANGERS."

For a long time—it seems for hours—we drive along a dark, heavy, lonely road, in absolute silence.

I should immensely like a cigar, but something almost tragic in the attitude of my motionless, speechless companion, makes me feel that to ask her permission to smoke would be in the last degree unympathetic.

I venture to ask if she is cold, and she answers, "Oh no, not at all," in a tone which assures me that she really does not know or care whether she is cold or not. After this there is no more to be said, till our driver suddenly checks his horse, and jumping down, begins carefully to lead him up a steep ascent.

Then my companion rouses herself, sits upright, and says—"This is Maple Hill, from which both the village and the house you are going to visit take their names. You need not drive me further than the top of the hill. I shall then be very near my home."

Such an expressive, little pause she makes before uttering that last word! "But," I answer eagerly, "surely you will allow me to put you down at your own door? The roads are frightful; and really, you know, you ought not to be walking alone on such a night as this. What will your people say?"

"My people," she replies, with the same tone of half-ironical sadness, "will not concern themselves in the least about my being alone. If I were not alone they might indeed object."

"But," I persist, "they need not see me, you know. And if you wish it to be an Arabian Nights sort of affair—mystic, you know—you can tie a handkerchief over my eyes and tell me to drive fifty paces before I take it off, or something of that sort; and then of course I should never know the house again. Places look so different by daylight—especially when one has never seen them at all."

"It is too dark to distinguish the expression of her face, but I know by the tone of her voice that I have made her smile. Still she is inflexible."

"Thank you, but indeed that would not do. It must be as I said. No doubt you think I act strangely, but I am strangely situated; and have something still more strange to ask you. If by any chance we should meet during your visit to Maple Hill—"

"If by any chance!" I repeat, interrupting her in uncontrollable astonishment—"why, it is not a chance at all—it is a certainty. In a village like this we must meet. Often, I hope."

"Few things are more improbable," she replies. "But what I want to say is that if we should meet—it must be as utter strangers."

At first my surprise completely silences me. I have really felt an interest in this girl, and tried to show it to the best of my ability. I have looked forward to an acquaintance with her which after such an odd beginning could not become so formal and conventional as usual, and I cannot think I have deserved this sort of dismissal.

"Certainly, if you desire it," I answer, coldly, after a moment's pause. "But I confess you give me a hard task."

"Pray do not think I am ungrateful!" she exclaims, answering my aggrieved tone.

"There is nothing in the world to be grateful for," I reply, sulkily. "I could have done no less for anyone under the same circumstances." (I wonder whether she understands that I intend my tone to imply, "I would have done a great deal more for you.") "I only felt surprised that after being thrown together in a way which might naturally have made us a little more than acquaintances, you should insist on our becoming so much less."

"It is not my fault," she says, distressed. "I quite appreciate your kindness. I shall

remember it gratefully all my life, but you must forget me!"

"That will not be easy."

"Well, you must behave as if you had forgotten me—or rather, as if you had never seen me—if we do chance to meet again, or you may do harm that can never be undone. As to me, I can never forget. It may seem to you a little thing that you have done," she goes on, with the impulsive grace which seems natural to her, and which every now and then breaks through her acquired reserve, "but to me it is a great one. I have not met with kindness so often that I can easily forget it; and I suppose no man can understand the relief a woman feels when she is taken care of—even for an hour!"

There is such touching and appealing weariness in her voice; she seems as though her young life had been so weighed down with care for others that I am hurried into saying, "I should like to take care of you, often. Why will you not let me be your friend? I think you need one?"

"No. I must have no friends. I only spoke so freely because it was for the last time, and because I could not endure that you should think me ungrateful. Now we are at the top of the hill. Make your driver stop here for two or three minutes. Thank you! thank you for all your kindness. Now, good night—and goodbye!"

While speaking, she opens the door of the wagonette and rises to her feet. Then she springs lightly out and vanishes—swallowed up by night and darkness.

Five minutes later I am driven through the lodge gates of Maple Hill House. I can only dimly make out a large, straggling building, surrounded by large, straggling grounds. Plenty of large dogs, and small ones, too, give a noisy greeting to the wheels of my chariot, and then there is a flash and hurry of lights and servants, and I am ushered into a large, rather gloomy apartment, at one end of which a fire glows silently.

On either side of the fireplace stands a small table, bearing a shaded lamp. An elderly lady sits working by one table, an elderly gentleman sits reading by the other. Nothing can exceed the sober and respectable dullness of this interior which I invade at such an unprecedented hour almost like a stranger and a bombshell. I do not seem to be so unwelcome, however.

The elderly gentleman throws down his *Quarterly* when I am announced, and advances to greet me.

"Well, my dear sir, I am glad to see you at last! We have been looking forward to that pleasure for a long time. But we have managed badly amongst us, eh? What a day for a journey! And how did you get here? We would have sent a carriage to meet you if we had known you were coming to day!"

"I had been obliged to put off my visit so often that I thought you would all be tired of my continual vagabondage, and determined to start at the first opportunity, without waiting to write. Of course, I hit on a bad day—one always does!"

"Shocking—shocking! and no conveyance to be had but a wagonette! How was that?"

"Someone is giving a ball at the 'George,' and all the cabs were engaged."

"Ah! to be sure. Philip has gone there. You ought to have come down a day or two earlier and gone with him, if we had only known—that is, if you care to turn out for a long drive on such a night for the sake of half-a-dozen dances. But I daresay you do; I daresay you do. There's no accounting for tastes!"

During the conversation that ensued I observe my host and hostess with some curiosity.

Philip Heron, and I were at Rugby, and afterwards for a short time at Gains together, and were always excellent friends. But I never saw his people before. In fact, in those days I did not even know where they lived.

They were keeping very quiet in some country corner—retrenching, I believe, to meet the expense of their boy's education. I had a strong impression that they were far from well off; pocket-money never seemed plentiful with Philip; hampers never came for him; and there always seemed to be a difficulty as to where he should spend the vacations. Once or twice I took him home with me; and the year I left college we spent a month in a walking tour across the heather.

All that time with boyish injustice, I had thought of the invisible mother and father as ogres, unduly and unnaturally hard on their poor persecuted son, whose handsome face, gay temper, and winning manners, made him a favourite wherever he went. I pictured them as hard, parsimonious and despot, grinding him down and taking a delight in doing it. It was rather amusing how to compare those fancy portraits with the reality. Nothing could have been less like the comfortable couple who made me so warmly welcome—the father ruddy and genial, the mother soft and gracious. They look as though no anxious feeling or harsh thought can ever have troubled the smooth waters of their existence, and though I know well that they have had cares, I feel enthusiastically certain that they never deserved them.

"We are so happy to see you under our roof at last, Mr. Poyntz," says Mrs. Heron, in her mild persuasive tones. "We have so often wished to thank you for all your kindness to dear Philip, at a time when circumstances compelled us to seem to neglect him so much."

"Yes," says her husband, heartily. "He was lucky in having a friend like you—very lucky indeed. We are quite sensible of it, my dear sir."

They insist on my making a substantial meal, and on sending me off to bed, Mrs. Heron, adding,—

"We breakfast at nine, Mr. Poyntz. But there is no law against fresh coffee being made at any hour."

CHAPTER IV.

HONORA.

I TAKE such full advantage of my hostess's gentle hint about the possibility of getting fresh coffee at any time that suits me that the family breakfast hour has long passed, and Mr. Heron has ridden off to a distant part of his property, when I at last make my appearance.

In fact, whilst I am still in the midst of my apologies to Mrs. Heron the door opens, and culprit number two enters—bright and good-looking as ever, serene as though he wore the soul of punctuality, fresh as though he had gone to bed with the domestic fowls. The start he gives on catching sight of me is quite dramatic.

"Poyntz!" he cries, "for I suppose it is Poyntz—though you hadn't grown a hair of that black moustache last time I saw you—when and how, in the name of all that is intelligible, did you get here?"

"I arrived last night, I may say, by water," I answer, laughing. "I did the last stage in the 'George' wagonette."

"The 'George'! By Jove! why I was there, at a dance—old fellow, if I had but seen you!"

I am sorely tempted to say that I did see him, but I don't quite know how I could account for not having sent a message to him. I fear that if I once begin disclosures they may lead me further than I intend, so loyalty to my fair unknown keeps me out of danger.

"Well I'm awfully glad you are here at last, old man. You don't look altogether withered and dried up by London smoke. He's not such a bad specimen of a cockney quill-driver on the whole, is he, mother?"

"You are very rude, Philip, but I suppose Mr. Poyntz is used to you. Did you enjoy your evening? Was it a good ball?"

"Pretty fair, for a country hop."

"Who was the belle?"

"Miss Corbet, of course."

"How did she look? what did she wear?"

"She looked as she always looks. How in the world can I tell what she wore, my dear mother? You women always fancy we are as well up in millinery jargon as yourselves."

The words would sound harsh on any other lips, but something in Philip's voice and smile makes, and always has made, commonplaces seem lively and impertinences pleasant.

The storms of yesterday have vanished with the darkness, and now the sun is shining with that brief, fierce heat which sometimes follows rain in early autumn. The trees and turf wear a fleeting look of spring's green freshness after their plentiful shower-bath.

"We are getting the place into something like order now, but there's a great deal to be done yet," observes Philip, when, breakfast over, we have explored gardens, vinerias, green-houses, forcing-houses, stables—and all at last pausing to admire a group of noble beeches in the park, when a third person appears on the scene.

"Hulloa, young men!" shouts the hearty voice of Mr. Heron, who has ridden up to us across the turf, unheard and unseen in our close conversation. "How is it you are not pitching into the partridges? Not in good form for powder after the ball, do, Philip? Good heavens! I don't know what young men are made of now-a-days. When I was young we thought nothing of riding twenty miles to a ball (no railroads then, my boy), dancing all night, and turning up at the cover side at ten sharp next morning!"

"Fact is, sir, you used up all the muscular energy so extravagantly in your time that none was left for us. We will show you what execution we can do to-morrow, as early as you please. After lunch, to day, I want to make one or two calls, and Poyntz is going with me."

I think the expression of Philip's ingenuous countenance would have told me that one of these calls was likely to be a very special one, even without the private observations which I had the opportunity of making last night. And I feel an extraordinary amount of virtuous indignation on behalf of the fair unknown when I notice my friend's restlessness and absence of mind during lunch, his careful toilet, and his alternate preoccupation and excitement during our ride from Maple Hill to Ferny Grove.

"I am going to introduce you to the belle of the ball, Gerard," he says, rousing himself from a fit of abstraction, as a handsome white house comes in view, backed by a semi-circle of Scotch firs; "that's Sir John Grove's place, and Miss Corbet is his ward. Now you will see what you missed by not being with me last night."

Lady Grove is at home, we find, on reaching the house, and in her I have no difficulty in recognizing the wearer of the emerald velvet last night. But she is peacefully stitching away at something incomprehensible in crewels, quite alone—and a hot flash mounts to Heron's pleasant face when he becomes aware of the fact.

"How good-natured of you to come and enliven my solitude," says the much-mistaken woman, as he seats himself facing her, smothering his disappointment as best he can.

"I have been left to myself the whole day. Sir John and the men were off long before I came down, and the girls drove over to Bagley Wood with their luncheon, and I have seen nothing of any of them since."

For the next ten minutes we do our best to amuse Lady Grove—not at all a difficult task—and then manage to get just as far as the huge stone portico on our homeward way, when we see the whole party of absentees coming up the steps.

Miss Corbet is first. In her plain, closely-fitting brown velvet dress and small hat, without any ornament but the brilliance of her eyes and the delicate bloom of her cheeks, I think she looks even handsomer than in all last night's radiance. But probably I should

think the same of any attire in which she chose to array herself. I wonder what she would think if she knew that a flower from her hair is reposing (in a somewhat faded and flattened condition) not very far from my heart?

She is attended by Captain Grove, of the straw-coloured moustache; and also by a middle-aged, close-shaved, and closely-cropped man, with a plain, high-cheek boned, hard-featured face, but a good walk and figure, and scrupulously simple dress, whom, I hear them call Lord Caradoc.

Philip passes this group with a slight bow and a quickly averted glance, and would do the same to the noisier and far more numerous party who follow, but they have no idea of letting him escape so easily. On the contrary, they surround him with hearty greetings and merry questions, and I see that handsome Philip is as great a favourite here as he was everywhere in the days of our boyhood.

"You must turn back with us. Oh! nonsense, indeed, you must!" cries Nellie Grove, a pretty brunette of eighteen.

"Have you had any tea? How very inhospitable of mother to let you go away without it! We are all dying for our tea."

"Thanks. But I fear we shall be late for dinner if we stay now."

"You don't really fear anything of the kind. We are going to have it at once, in the hall. It's so much more jolly in the hall than upstairs, and we are quite tired to death. Fancy being out-of-doors nearly all day, after dancing quite all night!"

"I was amazed to hear of your energy!"

"I am not sure!" admits Miss Nellie, artlessly, "that we should have been quite so brisk, but Lord Caradoc rode over too late after the men had started, so we had to show him the way. And then he made a point of our going back to lunch with them. Now, Mr. Heron, you are coming in with me!"

He does go in with her, after all, and on the spot improvises a strong flirtation, to which the young lady has not the slightest objection to respond, while I slowly follow, at leisure, to observe her who fills all my thoughts.

The spell is upon me at last, to which hitherto I have fancied myself insensible. I am half inclined to say, with the Lady of Shalott, "the curse is come upon me!" For what hopeless, mad infatuation must be any fancy of mine for such a woman as Honora Corbet!

However, this tragic mood does not last.

It only sends a sharp sense of my own folly across my mind, and then every other feeling is absorbed in the pleasure of watching her.

She gives one swift glance, almost of amusement, as Philip, whose artless tactics must be quite transparent to her eyes; and then going on into the hall, seats herself in a quaintly-carved chair of dark oak, whose high back makes a most artistic framework for her fair head, and continues her low-toned talk with Lord Caradoc, while Captain Grove takes from her the hat and gloves she has thrown off.

There is a fascination in the grace of her figure, the music of her voice, which compels me to look when she moves, to listen when she speaks.

At last those wonderful, changeful, lustrous eyes meet mine, with an expression of coquetry—nay, of interest.

At this moment Sir John Grove, who despises afternoon teas, and left us in search of what he considers a more manly beverage, returns, and draws Lord Caradoc into a discussion on some point of local politics, in the course of which he rises, and joins his host on the hearth.

Then Miss Corbet's wonderful eyes say so plainly, "Come and speak to me," that I obey the summons as though it had been put into words, and appropriate the vacant chair by her side.

"I cannot help thinking we have met before," she says, in those low tones which without the appearance of whispering she can manage to

make inaudible to all save one happy hearer. "Have I not seen you in town?"

"Most certainly not! I do not remember ever meeting you in London." (I cannot say I never saw her before!) "And if I had done so it would have been impossible that I should forget."

"How strange! Then perhaps—" with a thoughtful pause—"is Mrs. Neville Beauchamp a great friend of yours?"

"She is my cousin!"

"And she has a photograph of you in her album?"

"I believe she has half a dozen."

"Ah, then it must be your portrait that I have seen."

Idiot that I am! The grave, simply spoken words send the blood to my cheek and set my heart beating, though I am perfectly well aware that Honora Corbet cultivates admiration as one of her beatitudes, and I see that every male creature who approaches her, young or old, stranger or kinsman, becomes hopelessly entangled in her net.

Still there is a subtle flattery in the thought that this brilliant creature during all the triumphs of her London season must have seen my portrait, noticed it, remembered it and recognized me by it, or how could I have become at all associated with Laura Beauchamp in her mind?

The secret complacency with which I dwell on this idea is rudely disturbed by Philip, who comes up to tell me that we shall inevitably be late for dinner and set down in the blackest of black books by his father unless we mount instantaneously.

Then he, too, lingers for a parting word with the enchantress.

"Faithless!" he says, in an energetic whisper.

"How so?" asks Honora, lifting her lovely eyes, all innocent candour, to his face.

"Did you not promise that if I rode over after lunch to-day I should find you at home? Do you never, even by accident, keep a promise?"

"Did I promise to stay at home? That was very rash. But then, you know, it did not seem likely to be at all nice weather for walking. Now as it turned out it was quite too lovely to stay indoors."

"Besides," says Philip, with what he intends for withering sarcasm, "besides, you were, of course, obliged to pioneer Lord Caradoc."

CHAPTER V.

LORD CARADOC SEEKS ADVICE.

A fortnight or so of the easy intimacy and constant running up against each other of country life makes me as much at home with the Herons and their neighbours as though I had been "to the manner born." They all seem to be very well off, very sociable, very much given to entertaining and being entertained.

Philip's popularity is an intense delight to his father. He talks of it to me sometimes with full reliance on my sympathy.

"You see he has quite taken his place," Mr. Heron says, with after-dinner expansion. "He is the finest young man in the county, sir, and I don't think many people would contradict me. Now I have only one wish left—to see him in Parliament. But first of all he must marry, sir—and he must marry well. 'It's an enormous satisfaction to me,' he adds, filling up his glass and sending the decanter my way, "that the boy has never been drawn into the slightest entanglement, though he is such a good-looking fellow, and so run after wherever he goes."

Oh, indeed! Then how about that blue ring, and the poor girl's overwhelming agitation at seeing Master Philip?

I need not say that this remark is strictly confined to myself. But when Mr. Heron is in a communicative mood he needs only an appreciative listener, and does not pause for comment or rejoinder.

The hero himself, I should observe, finding our session grew tedious, has withdrawn to the conservatory, where he is amusing himself by driving his mother's cockatoo to fury and ob-jurgation, by alternately giving and withholding fragments of macaroons.

"Not a single scrape, sir, has my boy ever got into, and the mad way some young fellows ruin their future prospects for the sake of a pretty face! Now, even when our affairs looked so unpromising that he might well have been desperate and thought they could not be worse, he kept square, and when he was so long abroad (and I was deuced unwilling to let him go, for I know something of the mischief done by living on the continent), he came back as free as he went. No more wine? Then suppose we look for Mrs. Heron."

"When he was abroad so long." And my fellow-traveller told me that she had lived abroad "till quite lately." Was I getting hold of a clue to the mystery? How I wished she had not bound me so strictly to secrecy as to our meeting, so that I could have questioned Philip frankly, and brought him to book.

Plainly, something was wrong. Either Philip had fallen a victim to Miss Corbet and was playing the other poor girl false for her sake; or he was paying violent attentions to Honora, in order to blind his own people to a more serious, but less eligible attachment.

But, in either case, there was the mysterious maiden? I have constantly looked out for her, wherever fate and Philip might take me. But so far her prevision that we should not meet again seems likely to prove correct.

But I determine to get what I can out of Philip. I question him rather closely about the girls of the neighbourhood.

"And so you have not many pretty girls in these regions, Phil?" I ask, meditatively, after a brief pause.

"I think we are fairly well off—all that there is you have seen, as I have already had the honour of telling you."

"All—without any exception? Are you sure there is no one lying *perdue*, born to blush unseen by any eyes but yours?" I persist.

Either Philip really looks uneasy and suspicious, or my secret consciousness makes me think he does.

"Why in the world do you ask?" he inquires, with rather a forced laugh.

"Well, your father was talking to me about your matrimonial prospects the other day, and I wondered what limits there might be to your range of choice."

"I suppose they are not geographical. But what did the governor say about it?"

"He said what governors usually do say. That it is incumbent on you to find him a daughter-in-law with good looks, fortune and position. You are not to marry her without love, but you are not to love her without these requisites."

"Don't thee marry for money, but goa wheer money is," quotes Philip, laughing.

"Exactly. I quite understand. Well, if one were bound only to look in this neighbourhood for such a paragon, I suppose there can be little doubt of where she would be found," he adds, with the nearest approach he has yet made to putting confidence in me.

"You are thinking of Miss—"

"Speak of the sun and his rays shine," says Philip. "Look below."

We have reached the steepest part of Maple Hill—the part up which my unknown companion and I were led so carefully on the night of my arrival—where it becomes, in fact, a cliff, with a sheer fall of some depth on the right hand. Through the valley thus formed runs a broad, but shallow stream, across which is thrown a plank bridge with a rough hand-rail.

On the bridge stands Miss Corbet and Lord Caradoc.

She, graceful, elegant and tranquil as ever, turns a little aside, and looks intently in the rippling brook.

He leans one arm on the hand-rail, and, slightly bending, gazes only on her.

They do not hear the quiet fall of our horses' hoofs on the turf edge of the cliff, but their voices rise to us in the surrounding stillness.

"And you really think a rough, battered fellow like me, no longer young, and never particularly attractive when I was young, might still have a chance with a beautiful girl? For myself, I mean—I know there are heaps of girls everywhere, who would jump at the title and so on; but I am fool enough to wish to be liked for my own sake. That, partly, is what has kept me single so long!"

"I think," answers Honora, slowly and emphatically, "that any woman whom you could care for, and who knew you well, would be sure to like you for your own sake. Girls do not particularly admire boys, Lord Caradoc. It is much more gratifying to them to be the choice of a man of mature mind!"

"You really advise me to try my fate? Take care, Miss Corbet! I have no fancy for being refused, and I shall owe you a grudge if you mislead me!"

"I am willing to run the risk!" she replied, lifting her eyes to his with one of those appealing glances—those soft, lingering smiles—whose magic has so often been tried on both Heron and myself.

"Oh, by Jove!" says the former, between his teeth, "we have had quite enough of this sort of thing," and regardless of the astonished resistance of his horse, accustomed to more consideration, he urges him up the very worst bit of the road with something approaching to ferocity.

CHAPTER VI.

MOONLIGHT AND MYSTERY.

Does Honora Corbet really mean to marry Lord Caradoc, in whose unflattering estimate of himself I entirely concur, or is she only "fooling him to the top of his bent?" Has he or I, or Philip, been the dupe?

We are all at her feet—that is certain.

Is it merely from love of power that she keeps us there, or is her own mind wavering and uncertain between the material blessings of Caradoc Castle and its rent-roll, and one superior personal advantage.

I laugh to myself rather bitterly, as I ponder over these things in the solitude of my own apartment, too wakeful for bed, too lazy and preoccupied for a book.

Philip has gone off to his room rather earlier than usual, his humour perceptibly not improved by the encounter of the afternoon. And I have followed his example; but when once there do not in the least know what to do with myself.

I cannot entirely break myself into the early hours customary when there is no form of entertainment going on.

Some old sage remarks that "There is nothing like a spice of danger to stimulate enterprise."

Whilst dressing for dinner I noticed that a careless gardener had left his ladder leaning against the wall, just below my dressing-room window.

If it has not been removed three minutes will place me at liberty to enjoy a smoke and a stroll unknown to, unsuspected by, dog or man.

No sooner thought than done.

The door of my room is locked, the dressing-room window gently raised, my feet touch the topmost rung of the ladder, and a few seconds later they are planted on the turf.

Suddenly I hear footsteps on the gravel walk, a few yards from me—light, rapid, and regular.

Two figures emerge from the shade of the nearest cedar into the broad light of the moon, and as they do so, I step back into the deep shadow formed by a sharp angle of the building.

The new comers are a young man and woman; so much I can see already.

Domestic love-making, no doubt. I would not on any account interrupt their stolen bliss—nor, to tell the truth, do I want my

schoolboy escapade to furnish amusement for the servant's hall. I will lie hidden till they pass.

"Hang it all, they don't pass!" They stand still, exactly in front of my hiding-place—so near that I could almost put out my hand and touch them. And then I recognize in the romantic promenaders no maid-servant and man-servant bidding defiance to the higher powers—but Philip and the tall unknown.

Perhaps it is the effect of the moonlight, which certainly is a beautiful of all it touches; but she does look very fair, as she is thus unconsciously brought under my critical gaze.

Her face is pale and pensive as ever, but it has not the worn look of fright and fatigue it bore when I first saw it. Her eyes are liquid and lovely. Her figure is full of grace.

I admire, in spite of myself, but I cannot denote—I cannot even comprehend—the sense of bitter mortification with which I make this unexpected discovery.

Philip, it would appear, is always and everywhere preferred to me.

"I am sorry to be so persistent," the girl is saying, in those expressive tones which sounded so sweet when they were addressed to me (at this moment I think that I am more susceptible to a musical voice than to a beautiful face)—"I am sorry to be so importunate; but if you only knew how all this shame, and mystery and concealment are breaking my heart! The time seems endless, while we are in such a false position. I know I gave my consent at first; what choice had I? but I did not realize half the consequences it would entail. Now I had rather beg my bread than go on like this, if it were for myself alone. If we were only able to go away! Not a word should be said—I would make any promise, give any pledge of secrecy and concealment you chose to dictate, if only we could go away!"

In her earnestness she puts her hand on Philip's arm, and lifts her pale, sweet, troubled face, the dark eyes swimming in tears, to his own.

He presses the little trembling hand—I wonder he does not take her in his arms to console her, so appealing, so sweet, so distressed, does she look; but evidently his attachment must have cooled considerably.

"You embarrass me awfully," he replies, in a tone which is half sympathetic, half impatient. "I can't say how sorry I am for all this, but really, you know, I can do nothing. My father is dead against it, you see!"

"Your father does not understand—does not believe the truth," she replies, hastily withdrawing her hand, and standing before him erect with flashing eyes, like a little goddess of pride and scorn.

"If he did," comments Philip, pushing up his bright wavy hair with the perplexed gesture I knew so well, "if he did I'm afraid it would not amend matters much for you."

"Oh!" cries the girl, wringing her hands, "how cruelly, cruelly unjust!"

I don't want to learn their secrets—at least I don't want to go on overhearing them in this disgusting way, and perhaps find out something which may compel me to quarrel with Philip, or leave Maple Hill, or do something nasty and unpleasant. Yet what can I do? Already I have heard too much to make it possible to show myself.

Lingering moved a step nearer to my hiding-place as she leaves Philip's side, and I notice, to my redoubled amazement, that she wears some indoor dress of black gauzy material, and has over it nothing but a lace shawl—no hat, bonnet, or gloves; we must be very near neighbours, after all!

Clack goes my pastille-box against the stone coping of the wall. I had entirely forgotten that I was holding it in my hand, about to light a cigar, when first I heard their footsteps.

It is fortunate I had not lighted it, or the scent would infallibly have betrayed me!

They look round startled and anxious.

"I must go," says the girl, in a tone of bitter sadness. "I had far better not have come. What good has it done?"

"Stay a moment. I will walk with you. Do try to understand that I am not to blame. You know how I am situated; you know this state of things has not been brought about by me. If I am ever more independent—if it is ever in my power, I promise you—"

"I decline to look forward to your wearing dead men's shoes, if that is what you mean," she interrupts him, coldly, "and by that time there would certainly be one victim of this order of concealment beyond the reach of reparation."

I cannot hear his answer; they have moved too far away. I wait till the last faint reverberation of their footsteps dies in the distance, and then retrace my room by the same inglorious mode by which I left it—a "sadder" (that is to say, a more profoundly puzzled and dissatisfied) if not a "wiser" man.

CHAPTER VII.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE.

"They misinterpret me!" says Miss Corbet. "People almost always do misunderstand me. But," raising her radiant eyes to mine with a look half reproachful, half tender, "I fancied, somehow, that you would not."

She is seated in the verandah which runs along one side of the drawing-room at the Grove—a verandah roofed and wreathed with all sorts of graceful climbing plants, lined with every kind of scented exotic, and dimly lit by two or three Chinese lanterns. And I am leaning against the trellis-work, looking down on her.

She is worth looking at. Mah's eyes never rested on a fairer picture. She is very simply dressed in white, with black velvet at her throat and wrists, and one crimson rose fastened in the folds of her dress—the only point of colour about her, except the rival crimson which comes and goes in her cheeks.

She has more largely than any other woman I ever knew—the peculiar personal charm which is more powerful than beauty when they are divided, and is irresistible when they are combined. You may doubt or disapprove in her absence—in her presence you have no choice but to submit. A look from her is persuasion—a word conviction. She is not at all accomplished, intellectual, or clever. She never attempts the slang and chaff by which so many girls endow their amuse their brother's friends. She is simply herself—the most graceful, harmonious of women, whose smile is more eloquent than poetry—more soothing than music.

We have been dining at the Grove—Philip and I—and now, that high festivity is nearly over, and I am snatching one blissful half-hour, payment in full for the tedious formality of all the rest.

We are alone.

"I do not know how it is," says Miss Corbet, pursuing her confidences. "But everyone will tell you I am heartless, and care for nothing but admiration. It is not my fault if people will admire me. I really cannot help it, can I?"

"No," I reply, in all sincerity. "Nor they either."

"Ah! now you are laughing at me, and I am quite serious. What am I to do? It is hard—hard—because I do not actually make myself unpleasant to people, that I should be perpetually be accused of flirting, and then you see there is no one to take my part. I am very much alone in the world," she goes on, clasping her slender hands with a sort of "petitionary grace," and speaking in a soft and pleading tone—"You know I have none of those family ties that most girls have. I cannot even remember my father or mother, and I was their only child. The Groves have brought me up, and Nellie is very kind and good, of course, but she is not like a sister—not—"

"Not sympathetic?"

"Exactly. And my guardian and his wife often distress me. I know they mean it all for the best—dear, good people; but they are always planning for me, and insisting on my showing special civility to some eligible party."

"Lord Caradoc, for instance. By the bye, that potentate does not show to-night. What has become of him?"

"Oh! don't you know!" with a lovely crimson flush—"don't you know he has returned to his mountains?"

"Do you mean to the society of his maiden aunt, at the Hall?"

"No—no! To that great, dreary place in Wales, from which he takes his title."

"Indeed! A very sudden flight, was it not?"

"Well," looking down, and playing with her fan, with an air of the prettiest possible hesitation, "of course there were reasons."

"Miss Corbet—Hocora—can it be that he has gone back a disappointed man?"

"Is it quite fair to ask me? But how can you ask me? So worldly an everyone says I am!" she adds, with a laugh that is not at all mischievous.

"People are abominably unjust!" I indignantly exclaim.

"I will not deny," she presently continues, with much candour, "that perhaps, at one time, for just a little while, I may have been dazzled—tempted. Most girls would have been. It is a great position; but—but lately I have learnt that there are better things in life than rank and wealth."

Her look, her tone, something in her manner which no words can convey, dazzle and intoxicate me.

"Honora!" I exclaim, eagerly, bending over her till my lips touch her shining hair, "take care what you are saying. You make me think—you make me hope—you don't know what mad visions are rising in my brain."

"Tell them to me," she whispers softly.

"You deny that you are worldly—you say that you have given up ambition—that you are lonely—that you long for sympathy. If you meant all this—if by telling me you meant all that I dare to dream—if a life's entire devotion, a heart's worship can content you, take mine, and make me happy."

"This is indeed madness," she whispers, but her voice trembles, and her hand is not withdrawn. "You scarcely know me. A few weeks ago we were utter strangers."

"Utter strangers!" I wish she had not used those words! Across the atmosphere of glamour into which she has now plunged me, comes the recollection of the last time I heard them, as a breath of the pure air of heaven may blow across the scented closeness of a crowded ball-room.

But this is no time for such memories. "Love is like death," I answer her, hurriedly.

"It knows no limit of time."

"This must be a dream!" she murmurs.

"It rests with you to make it a reality."

There is talk and movement in the drawing-room. Some one approaches the verandah.

Miss Corbet rises—not abruptly, but with the harmonious composure which characterises all she does.

"One instant!" I implore, in an eager whisper. "You have not given me my answer. May I ask for it to-morrow?"

"Oh! not to-morrow—that is too soon. You must let me think over what seems so strange and sudden, and then there will be so much opposition."

"The sooner we face it the better. At all events you allow me to hope?"

"I cannot prevent it—can I? Well, to-morrow, you know, we all ride to the High Springs. Two days after that, perhaps, if you do not change your mind."

The tenderness of her look makes up for the playfulness of her tone, and I feel certain that the depths of her nature have been stirred at last, and that if this is a dream it is one from which neither of us will ever wish to wake.

Half-an-hour later Philip is driving me back

o Maple Hill. Through all my triumphant excitement I feel some twinges of remorse; as I glance at his face, which looks pale and haggard in the moonlight.

For a wonder he has not appeared to notice my monopoly of Honora Corbet. In fact, it may have been only by a strong effort that he has noticed anything around him. Some subject confined to his own breast has engrossed all his thoughts.

Unless I am much deceived, I can partly guess what that engrossing topic must be, and after what I heard and saw last night, why should I feel any self-reproach for having won Honora?

When I wake next morning my mind is a chaos of mingled rapture and consternation. I hardly know whether I really am an "engaged" man or not, and what is yet worse I hardly know whether I wish to be!

When I am with Honora there is no shadow of doubt about it, but once away from the bewitching charm of her presence other considerations will intrude. I know that I have been hurried, fascinated into saying what in calmer moments I should have left unsaid—at all events as yet. My fate has been precipitated; whether for good or evil time will show.

What present means have I of making a fit home for such a peerless bride? My modest competence would seem the barest provision for one accustomed like Honora to town gaiety and country comfort. Her dainty elegance would look even ludicrously out of place in such a setting as I could give my jewel.

True, she is a prize which would simply crown a whole life-time of struggling self-denial; but how will she like to wait whilst I struggle? Well, if she is patient and generous enough to do so, I can but do my best to prevent her from ever repenting. Who could believe that a girl of her position and opportunities would make such a sacrifice? I cannot credit my good fortune!

Philip does not join us at breakfast, and as soon as the meal is over Mrs. Heron invites me to accompany her on a tour of inspection through the hot-houses. This is a somewhat unusual honour, and I am rather at a loss as to how I have deserved it.

When at last we enter a pinery where there is no gardener at work, my hostess hurriedly explains herself.

"I asked you to come with me this morning, Mr. Poynts," she says, "in order that I might consult you about Philip. I know you will make allowance for a mother's anxiety. He does not confide in me, but, of course, no one can help being aware that he is deeply attached to Honora Corbet."

"Do you think so?"

"Why, you must have observed it. No one can fail to do so. Do not be afraid of betraying his confidence!"

"He has placed none in me!"

"Is it possible? I thought young men always told each other such things! But what I wanted to ask you was whether anything had gone wrong between them—whether there was any little quarrel or estrangement—because you must have noticed that my poor boy has not been at all like himself lately."

"I have certainly thought his spirits rather variable for the last few days."

"He is not at all the same creature, and you cannot even guess the cause?"

"I assure you, my dear Mrs. Heron, he has told me nothing."

"I hope—I hope it is not Honora's fault," she sighs. "She is a most lovely and charming girl, but people do say she is both ambitious and fickle, and if she has been playing with Philip I know how he would suffer, and he ought to be happy—he deserves to be happy!"

On this point I have my own opinion, but it is one which I need scarcely say, I keep strictly to myself. No more is said on the subject, and poor Mrs. Heron returns to the house having profited little by our conversation.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT CAME OF A RACE.

THE riding party to the High Springs bids fair to be very pleasant. The morning is bright and sunny, though with a dash of autumnal freshness in the air. I have chosen a horse which the grooms say is rather fresh, and which they further aver is not blest with the sweetest temper in the world. But I have had Red Rover out before; I know he can go like the wind, and in my present state of mind, chafing, too, under the delay imposed upon me by Miss Corbet, I think it will do me no harm to have something to occupy me besides my own tumultuous thoughts.

As I watch her, so well appointed, so much at home, I have an involuntary vision of Honora in suburban London, paying calls in that last resource of shabby gentility—a second-rate hired brougham.

Can I bring her to that?

Mr. Heron and Sir John Grove, deep in country prospects, are jogging on side by side.

Neillie and Philip, Captain Grove and a young brother officer also on furlough, a pleasant girl who is staying at the rectory, Honora and I agree to a race to the High Springs—a pretty cascade in the hills whence the brook already mentioned takes its rise.

The prize is to be a silver arrow, which fastens Honora's hat.

At first we keep together, pretty well, but as the ground begins to rise rapidly, the superiority of the horses Honora and I am riding tells visibly.

One after another of our companions drops behind, and when the Springs—two threads of silver glistening in the sun, against a dark rocky background—at last come into view, we alone are there to hail the sight.

Honora is doing her best to win, and perhaps I ought to allow her to do so. But I have set my heart on that silver arrow as a *gage d'amour*.

Red Rover has entered into the spirit of the thing as keenly as his rider, and when only a few yards have to be covered he forges bravely forward, and I jump down beside the miniature cascade and making a cup of my hand drink Honora's health as she draws bridle by my side.

Laughing and blushing she admits herself beaten, and raises her hands to unfasten the trophy from her hat.

But as she does so she utters a cry of dismay—her little gold-handled whip slips from her loosened grasp, and rolling down the hill drops into a wide pool formed by the springs before they flow off into the brook, and artificially deepened to make a reservoir for dry weather.

Of course I follow the whip, and of course I dive for it. What less could a man do for his lady-love?

There is not the slightest danger, except of a thorough wetting, for I can swim.

But the water is chilly after the heat and excitement of our gallop, and I am shivering with most uncomfortable violence, as I run up the hill and exchange the recovered treasure for the silver arrow.

Honora's thanks are earnest—even tender.

But the others are all riding up by this time, and amidst a chorus of mingled chaff, condolence, and congratulation on my exploit, I receive one piece of advice which seems sensible on the face of it—to ride home as fast as possible and change my dripping garments. The luncheon party at the Grove must perforce be given up.

One parting word with Honora we manage between us to secure.

"May I come to you to-morrow for my answer?" I ask.

And she whispers, "Yes."

Red Rover has to do his utmost for the next half-hour or so, and I am rattling down hill at a pace which it is impossible to check on the instant, when a little boy toddles out of a cottage door and plants himself directly in my way.

In vain I shout—the noise only seems to amuse him.

I pull Red Rover up, even on his haunches, but in rising he strikes out with one foot, and the unlucky infant is rolled in the dust.

In a moment I am off the horse, and having slipped his bridle over the garden gate, I pick up the sprawling and screaming urobian, more frightened than hurt, and carry him indoors.

It is some time before I can make anyone hear.

At last a woman comes downstairs, to whom I explain what has taken place.

I don't think there is any great harm done, I assure her. Certainly no bones are broken. But if she likes I will send for Dr. Hart to see the child, as soon as I get back to Maple Hill.

To my surprise she seems much more anxious to keep the cottage quiet, and get rid of me than concerned about the boy. No, I need not trouble to send the doctor.

He will be there in the course of the day, sure enough, and then he can see Willy, to whom she administers a vigorous shake by way of silencing his fretful cries.

It dawns upon my dull understanding that there must already be illness in the house. So, slipping some silver into the child's hand, I remount and ride away.

But while thinking over my little adventure I unconsciously take a wrong turning, and find myself, after another half-hour of sheepriding, in a wild and lonely region, which I have never yet explored.

I thought I should beat Maple Hill by lunch time, but on looking at my watch I find it is already past the hour. And surely it has suddenly become very dark for the time of day?

What is that noise—thunder?

Yes! and Red Rover, whose uneasy temper has already been irritated by the anxiety of the child and the ignominy of being tied to a cottage gate, strongly objects to it.

Presently there is a rending flash of lightning, at which he chooses to shy violently. And as at the moment I am attending more to the storm than the horse, he pitches me over his head, and when I fall, my own strikes sharply against a heap of stones!

CHAPTER IX.

NOT TO BE.

Is this myself—this helpless mass of aching inutilty?

I suppose it must be; but the heavy object lying half-consciously amongst a heap of pillows, too weak to move, to speak, to think, is difficult to identify.

I have puzzled over the problem several times before, I know, at long intervals; but hitherto it has always got the better of me, and whilst wrestling with it I have drifted away into a state of unconsciousness again.

Now I try to solve it by the sense of touch, and find that only one hand is available for the purpose.

The other lies by my side, swollen and benumbed, and the arm to which it belongs is imprisoned in splints and bandages.

It takes me so long to make this important series of discoveries that at the end of them I fall back, quite exhausted.

Next time I return to consciousness my brain is clearer; there is more light in the room; and on moving my head a little I see, sitting near the bed, and intent on some noiseless needlework, *Fincham* herself.

The return to consciousness after serious illness has one characteristic in common with dreams; nothing seems very surprising to the patient.

Accordingly I am not at all startled by this apparition, unexpected though it assuredly is, and lie watching the quiet figure, calmly and somewhat critically.

In the full morning light, composed and unconscious of observation, neither harassed nor excited, as I have previously seen her,

she is much more attractive-looking than I had supposed.

Not beautiful, of course; certainly not at all beautiful. But decidedly interesting, and possessing, what modern art critics tell us, is more valuable and durable than beauty—the indefinable quality called “distinction.” She reminds me of *Marguerite*—Matthew Arnold’s *Marguerite*, not *Faust’s*.

While I lie weaving these idle fancies about her she looks up, and meets my gaze, “with speculation in’t.” Then a gleam of pleasure lights up the thoughtful depths of her own dark eyes, and tinges her pale cheeks with colour.

“I am glad to see you looking so much better,” she says, gently, folding and laying aside her work. “I hope you are no longer in such pain. Now you must have some—”

“I don’t want anything at all!” I interrupt her, in an absurdly, unmanageably weak voice. “I only want to talk to you; to ask—”

“We nurses never inquire what our patients think they want,” she answers, with a smile. “We know all about it so much better than they do. Besides, unless you take everything I bring you I will neither listen to you nor answer your questions. And you will find that I can be very determined.”

So there is nothing for it but submission. And when I have obediently swallowed all she gives me, she resumes her seat and glances at her watch.

“Now you may talk to me—quietly—for exactly five minutes. By that time I hope your doctor will be here to say exactly how much exertion is to be permitted you.”

“Five minutes! and I want to ask fifty questions! Where am I—what has happened—how long have I been ill—what good fortune threw me into your care?”

“Stop! stop!” she cries, holding up a warning hand. I knew the pretty hand, and I knew the peculiar ring upon it too! And at sight of them so many memories and conjectures rush back upon my still feeble brain that I am on the verge of losing all control over my own thoughts again.

The sound of her quiet voice helps to steady them, however.

“You are in your own room at Maple Hill,” she says, “but I don’t wonder that you did not recognise it at first; we have been obliged to move and take away so much of the furniture. You had a very serious accident; Red Rover threw you during a thunderstorm. I suppose you must have missed your way, for they looked for you in vain in every likely direction after the horse found his way back to the stables. And when you were found at last—many hours afterwards—you were insensible, wet through, and had injured your head and broken one arm.”

“A tolerably good morning’s work, upon my word! And how long ago was that? It seems to me about a year!”

“Rather more than three weeks.”

“What a nuisance I must have been to everybody! I wonder when I shall be able to get back to town?”

“I fancy you must not even begin to think of it yet. And please don’t attempt to move that arm. The quieter and more patient you are, and the more obedient to your doctor and nurse, the sooner you will be able to run away from us.”

“I should think you will all be heartily glad to get rid of me. But it cannot have been only the shock of the fall which has kept me in this state so long?”

“No; you had concussion of the brain, followed by fever. And now you must not talk or be talked to any more, or very likely you will have a relapse.”

“Only one more question. Philip—Mrs. Heron—”

“They will be very glad to hear how much better you are. Now, not another word till your doctor comes.”

My doctor I find is young Hart, who is very clever and devoted to his profession, and has

evidently much enjoyed the variety introduced into his humdrum country practice by my rather complicated “case.”

My convalescence is slow and tedious, but I endure its fluctuations with a philosophy astonishing to myself, assisted by Hart’s society and the ministrations of the gentlest, the most patient, the most companionable of nurses.

She reads to me when I am unable to read to myself (the fever has weakened my sight, but Hart says that with care it will soon be as strong as ever again)—talks freely and pleasantly when I am disposed to talk—or sits at work, within hearing if I should want anything from her, in a silence which is almost equally companionable.

Since my poor aunt died, when I was a schoolboy, I have never been the object of special interest or care to any woman of my own class. My life has been that of a bachelor student in solitary chambers, with such brief social interludes as show women in an ornamental rather than useful light; whilst the female domestics to whose ministrations I am usually subject, are useful, but by no means ornamental.

My new friend is both; and the fresh experience is so agreeable that I think it cheaply purchased, so far as I am myself concerned, by this illness. Perhaps lingering physical weakness is mainly responsible for my cowardice (I am sure I hope it may be so) but it certainly is a fact that I am in no hurry to get strong—to leave my “loophole of retreat”—to enter again on the “race for wealth,” and to face the question of exactly how I stand with Honora Corbet.

Of course I am quite as much in love with her as ever. Of course she is still the most captivating, the most brilliant, the most maddeningly beautiful woman in the world, and of course if she is inclined to ratify her choice she will make me the happiest man.

But her image is too radiant for a sick room. It does not harmonise with this region of repose, and softened tones and subdued light. And I gladly seize a reasonable excuse for postponing all considerations of the future. I should rather like to know, however, whether she has once sent to inquire for me during my illness.

There is another point that puzzles me when I get too far on the road to recovery to take everything as a matter-of-course. How does it happen that the fair unknown is always here—that her authority seems absolute—and that I never see anyone else? No, by the way, she is not quite always here. She goes away before Dr. Hart comes for his long evening visits, and sometimes her place of watcher is taken by a good-natured but taciturn old woman who keeps my rooms in order, washes my hands and face as if I were a baby, and is called Mrs. Withers.

I am bound to confess that when this good creature is left in sole charge for long together I become so exceedingly restless and refractory that her equanimity gives way, and she trots off in alarm to fetch “the young lady,” as she calls her, and whom, as yet, I know by no other name.

As soon as I am able to sit up in an arm-chair for an hour or so daily, I resolve on getting to the bottom of some, at all events, of the small mysteries that trouble me.

“How is it,” I inquire, when “the young lady” is arranging some late chrysanthemums and fern leaves in a large Dresden vase on my table; “how is it that I have never once seen Philip or his father and mother all this time? I am quite well enough to see them now.”

I feel some difficulty in uttering Philip’s name to her with unconcern. It slipped out once before, earlier in my convalescence, and I remember how hurriedly she checked me. But I must have an explanation now at any risk.

That lovely sensitive flush which so promptly answers to every emotion rises on my companion’s delicate cheek. She pauses a little before answering.

Then with a sigh—“Well, you will be obliged

to know all about it sooner or later. But promise not to be very angry, or very much hurt—not to get excited and make yourself worse.”

“I will be as quiet as a lamb!”

“There was a little misunderstanding about your illness. You may remember that you went into a cottage before your accident—”

“With that boy Red Rover knocked down? Yes.”

“Dr. Hart was told that you had been there—that was how you came to be heard of, in fact. He was attending a bad case of typhus fever in that very cottage.”

She stops short in her revelations, looking reluctant and distressed.

“Well? Please go on.”

“When you proved to have fever it was at first feared that you might have caught it there, and Mrs. Heron, who is extremely nervous about infectious illness, persuaded her husband to go away at once.”

“Oh! and Philip?”

I suppose there is more wounded self-love and offended pride in my tone than I intended to betray, for the girl says eagerly, pleadingly,

“Oh! you must not, indeed, feel hurt with Philip. There are great excuses to be made for him. He stayed here some time after his father and mother left. He was intensely anxious about you. I am sure nothing would have moved him but the entreaties of Miss Corbet.”

“What?”

She starts and changes colour at the concentrated fury of my tone.

“It was only natural, you know,” she quietly resumes, after a short pause. “Philip could not do anything for you by remaining; and as they were engaged she naturally did not wish him to run any useless risk.”

I ask no more questions after that. I think I have heard enough for one day.

CHAPTER X.

A HANDFUL OF LETTERS.

ENGAGED to Philip—already! The “shallow Philip! Well, I must say she has lost no time about it. She might at all events have waited to see whether I was going to live or die. I suppose she feared I should recover and claim her! But why did she accept me, if she so soon tired of the bargain?”

By the way, I am not quite sure that she ever did accept me. Perhaps if I were to charge her with having done so she would say I had “misunderstood” her, like all the rest of the world.

There is more wounded vanity than despairing love in my reflections; and the effect of pique on heart-wounds is very much like that of carbolic acid on flesh-wounds. It makes them smart most abominably, but prevents festering and promotes healing.

I suppose it is my growing intimacy with Dr. Hart which suggests this surgical comparison.

He comes in earlier than usual on the morning after my nurse’s unwilling disclosures, and finds her with me, having just brought in a basket of fruit and a bunch of flowers.

“Well, doctor,” I exclaim, “I have learnt at last all that I am responsible for. I little imagined that I was emptying Maple Hill of its inhabitants, and spreading desolation around me.”

“It was a false alarm,” he says, laughing. “But perhaps it is quite as well that we should have had the field to ourselves while there was danger, though not of the sort they feared.”

“But it is quite time I was off now; the place ought to be disinfected and restored to its owners.”

“The infection arising from a broken arm is not alarming.”

“But seriously—when may undertake the journey? I am uncomfortable at the thought of having put everybody about in this way.”

“In a week or ten days I think you may venture. You must keep your arm in a sling for some time yet, but with ordinary care that

need not, of course, prevent your travelling. As to the good people who ran away from you your conscience need not be very tender. If they had listened to me, and not taken a panic they might have been here now."

"There was one, at all events, fortunately for me, who did not run away!" I remark, glancing at my nurse.

"I do not deserve any credit for that," she answered, hastily. "I was not a free agent!"

"Would you have forsaken me if you had been?"

"That is scarcely a fair question!" she says, her colour rising.

"Dr. Hart, I appeal to you. Do you think she would have run away like the rest?"

"No!" he replies, emphatically. "From my knowledge of Miss Rosalind, I don't think any risk to herself would drive her away from any one she could help."

This is satisfactory; and yet I don't think he need have testified quite so energetically—it is scarcely in good taste.

Then he says good-bye, promising to look in as usual during the evening.

"I am afraid you are not quite so well to-day after all," observes my gentle nurse, as the door closes behind the doctor.

"Oh, yes I am—better, unfortunately. What made you think me not so well?"

"Because I heard such a very, very deep sigh when Dr. Hart spoke of your soon being able to travel."

"I don't relish the prospect of approaching banishment, that is all!"

"Banishment! when you are going back to society, and all the interests of active life? I should have thought being imprisoned here was the real banishment!"

"See how different the actual always is from the ideal. You think I am to be congratulated on returning to hard work in solitary chambers, where there is literally no one to care whether I live or die except my old charwoman, to whom my life is important as representing so many additional shillings per week in her pocket. I, who have so long been accustomed to your care and companionship!"

"That is all very well," she answers, with the simple, straightforward composure which is not the least of her charms. "I owed you a 'good turn,' you know, and I am glad, most glad, that you think I have been able to pay it. But now you ought to be glad to go; of course this mode of life would soon become very tiresome."

"Not to me, if it did not become tiresome to you. I have never yet thanked you for all your goodness, and I fear I shall not be able to make you understand how grateful I am!"

"There is nothing whatever to be grateful for," she answers, and by her arch smile I know she remembers that she is quoting my own words once addressed to her. "I would have done as much for any one, and then you know I ran no risk!"

"But in all probability you saved my life. Yet, so strangely are we situated," I add, after a pause, "that I do not even know under what name to thank you."

I flatter myself that this is a highly ingenious way of insinuating the question which I hesitate to ask outright, but she baffles me.

"My name is Rosalind," she says, simply, and then I remember that Dr. Hart has addressed her as "Miss Rosalind" more than once.

"Rosalind?" I repeat, inquiringly.

"I had rather you did not ask me any more," she answers, very hurriedly and sadly. "I am not at liberty to explain any of the things concerning myself which very likely seem strange to you!"

Her words recall all the old puzzles, of which I have almost lost sight in our later intimacy. Our strange meeting, her determination that I should not know where she lived, her midnight interview with Heron—surely never were people so oddly thrown together!

And then another perplexing point recurs to me which passed unheeded at the time in

my own astonishment at what she had to tell. I mean the perfect composure with which she announced Philip's engagement. I will try the experiment of introducing his name again.

"I don't think I have ever asked you," I begin, speaking carelessly, but watching her closely; "where all my affectionate friends went to when I frightened them away from their own neighbourhood."

"Mr. and Mrs. Heron are at Barmouth."

"And Philip?"

"Philip is not very far from them," she continues, with the same unruffled tranquillity. "He went to Lord Caradoc's Welsh seat with the Groves and Miss Corbet. Miss Grove, I believe, is engaged to Lord Caradoc."

Wonders will never cease; and shocks to my vanity have certainly come thick and fast. This, I suppose, is the secret of Honora Corbet's condescension to me.

Conversation flags a little, and then Rosalind fetches me some letters, which she says she had forgotten. Among them was one from Laura Beauchamp, the last in the packet but the earliest in date.

"I heard yesterday from an old acquaintance of mine," writes my cousin, "who I find has become a new acquaintance of yours. I trust she is nothing more, though she makes most strict inquiries about you. She was at school with me, and even at that age I think such a calculating head was never set on woman's shoulders. You know me too well to suppose I am prejudiced against her because she is so pretty—on the contrary, I rather like her, but really she is awfully dangerous!"

I look again at the date of Laura's letter. It was written a few days after my declaration to Honora. So now, I suppose, the whole tangled web of her conduct lies unravelled before me. She led me on in pique at Lord Caradoc's desertion—she kept my fate trembling in the balance while she ascertained my precise value in the matrimonial market—and she threw me over at once and for ever on discovering how insignificant that was.

Well, it is a lesson—the sort of lesson which often leaves men cynics and sceptics as regards the faith and tenderness and virtue of women, and might have done the same for me had I not found an antidote in learning by heart the patience and simplicity and dignity of Rosalind.

But to what purpose? Since she is only a living enigma!

CHAPTER XI.

CAUGHT IN THE REBOUND.

It is my last evening at Maple Hill. I have no longer any shadow of excuse for remaining, yet I am unreasonably, unaccountably reluctant to go away.

I have walked in the gardens daily of late—sometimes even getting so far as the park; and once or twice Hart has asked me to drive with him. During this rapid progress Rosalind has made me shorter visits, and at longer intervals, though, on returning to the house after any absence, I generally find that she has been to my rooms, and left there some graceful token of her presence.

The little personal attentions she used to render so promptly and spontaneously, when she was anxious about my injured arm—arranging sofa-cushions and footstools, cutting magazines, handing tea, and peeling fruit—she has also gradually discontinued. And, in short, I find myself being gently let down from the privileged position of the invalid to the formal distance of the acquaintance.

To-day I have not seen her once, but as I return to the little sitting-room I have lately occupied, languid and depressed, after a solitary stroll round the now bare and desolate gardens, I hear the soft rustle of a woman's dress, and catch a flying glimpse of a well-known figure disappearing at the other end of the corridor—and cry, impatiently—

"Rosalind!"

Back she comes, blushing like a rose indeed, and re-enters the sitting-room, as I stand

aside to let her pass, with a deprecatory glance, half proud, half shy.

"Could you really have found it in your heart to go away without one word to me to-night—our last night?" I ask, reproachfully. "I have been looking for you all day. Such an unutterably dreary day it has been!"

"If I had known that you wanted me," she says, with hesitation.

"I always want you!"

This is tolerably strong, and not at all what I intended to say, though I fear it is literally true. Rosalind, however, is not the girl to appear to attach any special meaning to my words.

"You see," she answers, quietly; "as you will soon have to do without me altogether, it seemed best to accustom you to be independent by degrees."

"That is so illogical!" I answer, with irritation. "Because I cannot always have what I want I am never to have it. Will you tell me not to use my right hand when I leave off the sling, because some day I may injure the arm again?"

"Certainly not. But I advise you to use the left hand occasionally instead of the right, just as a measure of precaution."

She is cool enough to argue, it seems, and I suppose I am not. At all events she has the best of it, and so I abandon my clumsy figure and return to facts.

"Will you not stay and pour out my tea for me once more—this last evening?" I ask, entreatingly. For Rosalind still stands by the table, as though on the point of taking flight.

"I think you can do it for yourself now, quite easily," she says.

But I fancy from her tone that her resolution wavers.

"It is not half so refreshing when I do it for myself. Come, why should you refuse me this one hour, when you have given me so many—and when it must be so long before I am likely to trouble you again?"

"Well!" she answers, slowly, taking the chair opposite to mine, "it is, as you say, for the last time."

"I don't think that was exactly what I said. I did indeed say that this was our last evening here—under these circumstances. But nothing shall ever make me believe that you are never to pour out tea for me again."

"Nothing is less likely, though!"

"You said something very like that once before," I reply, provokingly. "Don't you remember the first time you made tea for me—and how fully persuaded you were then that it was the last?"

I have succeeded in my cruel design of shaking her composure. The colour rushes to her pale cheeks, and the fingers she clasps nervously together are trembling.

"You may possibly recollect, too, bidding me a final good-bye, and saying that *nothing was less likely* than that we should ever meet again!"

"Well, and did it not prove so?" she retorts, with sudden spirit. "Did we ever meet again—in the ordinary course of things? Did you ever even see me till I came to take your nurse's place?"

So far as she is aware, I certainly did not. And I should not like to tell her—yet—how and when I did see her!

"It required a very serious and unforeseen accident, you must admit," she urges gently, "to make me turn out a false prophet."

"What has been maybe. I would break the other arm to be thrown again upon your care—if there were no other way!"

I wish the excellent Withers on the very coldest pinnacle of Mont Blanc. For her entrance at this moment with the tray (I am still subject to the early hours, and "little and often" despotism of convalescence) prevents me from finding out what answer Rosalind will vouchsafe to this hazardous speech.

"How often I shall wish myself back here, when I am shut up in those dingy, dusty lonely rooms of mine!" I remark, after contemplating for some moments the trees waving

beyond the still uncurtained window, the bright fire flickering in the grate—the graceful figure and fair face opposite to me; all so homelike, and now so familiar.

"You think so at present," is the quiet answer. "But in the pleasure of returning to active life you will soon forget all this, or only remember it as belonging to a time when you were very helpless and uncomfortable."

"Is that the way you remember?" I ask, earnestly. "Will you forget all the hours we have spent together, or only remember them as a time when you were wearied and worn out by the exacting demands of a helpless invalid?"

She makes no answer, and looking scrutinizingly at her half-averted face, I see to my consternation that she is crying—she, ordinarily so calm, so tranquil, so self-possessed.

Two rapid steps place me by her side. She rises in agitation, and would hurry from the room, but I stand before her, and detain her.

"Rosalind—Rosalind, are those tears for me?"

She controls herself by a violent effort.

"No!" she answers, with a smile of indescribable sadness, "they are for myself. You little dream how much I have to endure. You little know what a refuge, what a resource it has been, to forget everything else in care for you! And then your words reminded me of how soon it would all be over; and the thought of the old life coming back, unchanged, unbroken except by the memory of what had been so different, seemed more than I could bear!"

"But if need not, will not, must not be so I shall return—perhaps very soon. They will all be glad to see me, clothed and in my right mind."

I continue trying for both our sakes to speak more lightly than I feel.

"Come as soon or come as often as you may, you will not see me."

"But that will be the chief object of my coming! After all that has passed you can not refuse me that smallest privilege of friendship."

"Long since I told you that friendship was not for me. Twice we have been thrown together by the strangest chance. It must not happen a third time, and again I beg you, as I did before, to conceal our having met from everyone."

"But that is now impossible," I urge, in astonishment. "This time it is already known to others."

"Only to Dr. Hart and Withers, and they can both be depended upon. They know the necessity for what I ask."

The sight of her distress, the thought of our speedy parting, impel me to say at once what I know will have to be said sooner or later.

The conviction has grown upon me, slowly but surely, that I have found the real love of my life; and it is impossible to leave her thus, surrounded by troubles of which I do not even know the nature.

"You trust Dr. Hart and Withers—will you not also trust me? I do not ask from curiosity. I want to share your burdens. You have become so necessary and so dear to me that whatever they may be I shall not think them a father's weight if you also give me—yourself."

She turns white, and trembles like a leaf.

"I—I do not understand—what you are saying."

"I am telling you that I love you, Rosalind, and asking you to be my wife."

"You mean this—you ask me to be your wife, not even knowing my name or my story—only meeting me in this humiliating concealment," she cries, vehemently.

"I know you, Rosalind. That is enough for me. If you desire it I will not even ask your secret again till all yours are mine and all mine are yours by right."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with a sob that seems to come from a breaking heart, "this is love indeed! and it must not be mine."

"It is yours, to all eternity. You cannot

alienate it. You may refuse me, but I will never give you up—never cease trying to win you—unless you can look me in the face and say you do not love me."

A deep crimson chases the whiteness from her cheeks. Her eyes are fixed on the ground, her hands slightly clasped.

"I—I—Heaven help me! I cannot say it."

"Then you must be my wife."

"Never—never—never!"

"You are bound, at all events, to give me some reason for refusing me."

She hesitates a moment, in deep, anxious, painful thought. At last her answer comes—faint and low.

"To-morrow—before you go—I will tell you."

And as the last word passes her lips she draws away the hands I have taken in my own, and hurries from the room.

(To be concluded in our next.)

FACETIE.

Is a woman were to change her sex what would she become?—A he-then.

SEXTONES are now darned by machinery. They are darned nice.

THE difference between sacred and secular music is not so great as it seems at first sight. You get the latter by the "sheet," the other by the "choir."

"WERE you ever in an engagement?" inquired an innocent rustic of a militiaman. "Yes, one," replied the son of Mars, heaving a deep sigh; "but she jilted me."

"You are the most handsome lady I ever saw," said a gentleman to one of the fair. "I wish I could say as much for you," replied the lady. "You could, madam, if you paid as little regard to truth as I have."

LITTLE Willie has been summarily corrected by his mother for repeated acts of naughtiness. The punishment being over: "Papa," he sobs, in tones of anguish, "how could you marry such an ill-tempered woman as mamma?"

ASHORE-EDLY.

(Nautical Impromptu.)

How careful sailors seem to be
To cleanse their vessel o'er and o'er;
Not only is she scrubbed at sea,
But sometimes even wash'd ashore.

TESTAMENTARY OBLIGATIONS.—"Cute little girl (who has heard conversations between her parents of the like import): "Uncle, have you made your will?" Uncle (startled): "Eh?" "Cute little girl: "Cause I hope you haven't forgotten my doll!"

It all depends upon circumstances. Strikes in manufacturing towns always cause a great deal of distress, but in a mine a strike is a most fortunate thing, especially if you strike it rich. But in both cases everyone is pleased when the strike is over.

A SLEEPER is one who sleeps; a sleeper is also a place where a sleeper can sleep; and a sleeper is, too, a thing over which runs the sleeper in which the sleeper sleeps; so that the sleeper in the sleeper sleeps, while the sleeper runs on, as well as sometimes leaps off the track.

WHEN Lord Hardwicke was at the Bar, Mr. Justice Powis had a habit of frequently using the phrases, "I humbly conceive" and "Look, do you see?" On one occasion, during an interval in court, the judge said, "Mr. Yorke, I understand you are going to publish a poetical version of 'Oke upon Lattinon.' Will you favour us with a specimen?" "Certainly, my lord," said the ready barrister, and proceeded gravely to recite:—

"Ho that holdeth his hands in fee,
Need neither to shake nor to shiver,
"I humbly conceive," for look, do you see,
They are his and his heirs for ever."

"My mother's awfully fickle," said little Edith to Mrs. Smith, who was making a call. "When she saw you coming up the street she said, 'There's that horrid Mrs. Smith. I hope she isn't coming here!' and a minute after she told you she was delighted to see you. Mother says I'm fickle, but I don't change my mind as quick, or so often as she does."

A LADY, taking tea at a small company, being very fond of hot rolls, was asked to have another. "Really, I cannot," she modestly replied. "I do not know how many I have eaten already." "I do," unexpectedly cried a juvenile upstart, whose mother had allowed him a seat at the table; "you have eaten eight. I've been counting!"

BROWN doesn't like his new domestic Dinah so well as he had anticipated. He complains that she is altogether too convivial for his taste. When anybody asks him to explain, Brown says, "She is never at home evenings—always going somewhere. She is, in fact, a regular Dinah out!"

A FRENCHMAN, boasting in company that he had thoroughly mastered the English language, was asked to write the following dictation: "As Hugh Hughes was having a yule-log from a yew-tree, a man, dressed in clothes of a dark hue, came up to Hugh, and said: 'Have you seen my ewe?' 'If you will wait till I see this yew, I will go with you anywhere in England to look for your ewe.'"

"We had an exciting time of it in front of the shop to-day," said Fogg. "A horse came tearing down the street, and he reached the crossing just as a little boy was half-way between the two pavements." "And was the poor little fellow run over?" came from half-a-dozen lips. "No," replied Fogg, quite coolly; "but his horse was." And the wretch fairly chuckled over his heartless joke.

A HARMLESS PRACTICAL JOKE.

Jack Pringle is a man who never wasted an opportunity, or puts off for to-morrow the joke that can be done to-day. Going down the street last Wednesday, he was accosted by a little nervous man who had an impediment in his speech.

Said the stranger: "C-can you t-tell me w-where I can g-get s-some t-tin t-tacks?" "With much pleasure, sir," replied Jack, who realized the position at once, and, having directed his interlocutor to the shop of a neighbouring ironmonger, by a somewhat circuitous route, he himself hurried off to the spot by a short cut. Now the ironmonger was having his dinner in a little back parlour, but when Jack entered the premises he came forward briskly, bowing and rubbing his hands together in that peculiar manner that is characteristic of the British shopkeeper.

"Do y-you s-sell t-tin t-tacks?" said Jack, assuming a stammer.

"Oh, yes, sir; certainly, sir."

"G-g-good long ones?"

"Yes, sir; all sizes, sir."

"W-with s-s-sharp points?"

"Yes, sir, very sharp points."

"W-w-well, then, s-s-sit down on 'em, and w-w-wait till I c-c-call again."

Having "given his order," Jack thought it prudent to retire at once, as there were several heavy articles within easy access of the proprietor's hands.

The old man had hardly cooled down and returned to his meal, which had also cooled down unpleasantly, when the real "Simon Pure" entered the shop, and again the ironmonger came forth, "washing his hands with invisible soap, in imperceptible water."

"Do y-you s-sell t-tin t-tacks?" said the little man.

Luckily the door was open, so the customer successfully avoided the two flat-irons hurled at him.

As to the remarks made by the dealer in ferruginous goods, the printer says that they "run too much on sots," and "he isn't going cut up a lot of rule to make dashes."

SOCIETY.

The second drawing-room of the season was held on March 13, and though the notices were short it was well attended, and the presentations were very numerous.

The Queen wore a dress and train of black satin, embroidered in black silk, and trimmed with chenille fringe, and a white tulle veil, surmounted by a diadem of emeralds and diamonds. Her Majesty also wore a necklace, brooch and earrings of emeralds and diamonds, the Riband and Star of the Order of the Garter, the Orders of Victoria and Albert, the Crown of India, Louise of Prussia, St. Catherine of Russia, the Spanish and Portuguese Orders, and the Saxe-Coburg and Gotha Family Order.

Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales wore a dress of turquoise blue satin, trimmed in volants of the finest Brussels lace, fastened with large bouquets of mixed roses, and a train of pompadour brocade lined in turquoise satin, and trimmed with the same lace and roses; corsage to correspond; head-dress, a tiara of diamonds, feathers, and veil; ornaments, pearls, diamonds, and sapphires; orders, Victoria and Albert, the Crown of India, St. Catherine of Russia, the Danish Family Order, and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrice wore a bodice and train of pale blue ottoman silk over a petticoat of blue and white brocade, trimmed with clusters and esprits of blue ostrich feathers; head-dress, feathers, veil, and diamond tiara. Her Royal Highness also wore pearl and diamond ornaments; and the Orders of Victoria and Albert, the Crown of India, the Portuguese, and the Saxe-Coburg and Gotha Family Order.

Some of the dresses of the ladies were very elaborate, the day being fine and warmer, and allowing more scope for spring toilettes.

HER MAJESTY, who is looking somewhat careworn and anxious; purposes, according to present arrangements, leaving England for Mr. Hanbury's villa at Mentone early in April.

A WARRIAGE is arranged between the Hon. Humphrey Sturt, only son of Lord and Lady Alington; and Lady Ffrencha York, eldest daughter of Lord and Lady Hardwicke.

EVERETT Hohenzollern Prince is bound by usage to learn a trade, and Prince Leopold, the only son of Prince Frederick Charles, and brother of the Duchess of Connaught, is working hard at the blacksmith's anvil.

M. BIGNON, secretary of the French Legation at Rome, is affianced to a daughter of Madame Ristori. The bride-elect is possessed of a considerable fortune, besides being accomplished and beautiful.

A novel and peculiar fancy dress was that worn at a ball in Australia by the wife of the editor of one of the daily papers, who represented in costume "The Press." The skirt of her dress was composed of several pages of the paper printed in colours on white satin; and the bodice of flags of the various Australian colonies, all in the distinguishing colours. The head-dress was that of Minerva, with the words "The Press" in both relief, printed in thirteen different colours.

BEFORE the happy event which recently occurred at Windsor and while it was expected every hour, a train was in readiness each night at Paddington as soon as the ordinary traffic was over to convey what extra doctors might be telegraphed for at any hour of the night. At six o'clock in the morning, when the usual service of trains began, this one went off duty to be ready again at midnight. The same regulations were observed in the case of the Duchess of Connaught some time previously, but in both cases the infants were born in the busy daytime.

STATISTICS.

THE destruction of seven million rabbits in Australia last year accomplished very little, apparently, in ridding the sheep farms of the rodent nuisance.

LIFEBOATS.—During the year 1882 nine new lifeboats were placed on the coast of the British Isles, and there now 273 under the management of the society; 741 persons have been saved during the twelve months from wrecked vessels. The lifeboats has also helped to rescue twenty-three vessels from destruction. The total amount of the donations and subscriptions received during that period had been £43,117, and the expenditure had amounted to £36,746.

Or more than 3,000 samples of wine analyzed at the Paris Municipal Laboratory during the last ten months, only between 300 and 400, or about one-tenth of the whole, were found to be of good quality. The rest were pronounced either passable or bad, without, however, for the most part, containing any poisonous ingredient; but some 300 or 400 revealed on analysis the presence of deleterious and noxious substances, such as sugar of lead, alum, and sulphuric acid. One half of the brandy tested at the laboratory was declared bad, not in the sense of being spurious—that is of course—but of being made from insufficiently rectified spirit produced from some substitute for grapes.

GEMS.

ENVY is a littleness of soul which cannot be beyond a certain point, and if it does not occupy the whole space, feels itself excluded.

SOLITUDE is a powerful aid to reflection and imagination. The higher faculties necessarily dwindle in a perpetual bustle.

Nothing is easier than fault-finding. No talent, no self-denial, no character, is required to set up in the grumbling business.

WHATEVER exception occurs, it is a great truth that man's body must be sound if he is to be sound in mind and in heart.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

GINGER CONDIMENT.—1 lb. white currants, 1 lb. loaf sugar, one quart spirits, one lemon rind, ½ oz. ground ginger. When the currants are bruised, add the lemon rind and ginger, also half the spirits; cover up close for two or three days, and stir them well occasionally; strain and add the rest of the spirits and the loaf sugar, finely powdered.

POTATO SALAD.—One pint of cold boiled potatoes; cut in one-half inch dice, or shaved in thin slices, seasoned with salt and pepper, one yolk of hard-boiled egg; one heaping teaspoonful of chopped parsley; one-half cup of cold beet-dice. Put alternate layers of potato, beet, egg rubbed through a fine strainer; parsley and French dressing, until the materials are all used. Keep on the ice until served.

PRESERVED ORANGES.—Take any number of oranges, with rather more than their weight in white sugar. Slightly grate the oranges, and score them round and round with a knife, but not cut very deep. Put them in cold water for three days, changing the water two or three times a day. Tie them up in a cloth; boil them till they are soft enough for the head of a pin to penetrate the skin. While they are boiling, place the sugar on the fire, with rather more than half a pint of water to each pound; let it boil for a minute or two, then strain it through muslin. Put the oranges into the syrup till it jellies and is of a yellow colour. Try the syrup by putting some to cool. It must not be too stiff. The syrup need not cover the oranges, but they must be turned so that each part gets thoroughly done.

MISCELLANEOUS.

INFIDELITY reproves nothing that is bad. It only ridicules and denounces all that is good. It tears down—it never constructs; it destroys—it never imparts life; it attacks religion, but offers no adequate substitute.

COURTESY is due to others. It is helpful to others. Treat even a base man with respect, and he will make at least one desperate effort to be respectable. Courtesy is an appeal to the nobler and better nature of others to which that nature responds. It is due to ourselves. It is the crowning grace of culture, the badge of the perfect gentleman, the fragrance of the flower of womanhood when full blown.

OPINION OF OTHERS.—We may not slight the opinions of others. They come to us as part of the materials which go to make up our conduct and our life; and they should form at least one factor in every decision. At the same time it is never to be forgotten that these opinions come to us, not as an authority to be obeyed, but as subject-matter for our examination and judgment. We are to treat them with neither defiance or submission; we should neither dismiss them as worthless nor yield to them as infallible.

A DOLLAR.—The word dollar has a singular and interesting origin. Its connection with dale, a little valley, would hardly be suspected, but it is etymologically that very word. It comes through the Dutch, from the German thaler. Now, this word is an abbreviation from Joachimsthaler, the coin having been so called because it was first coined from silver obtained from mines in Joachim's thal, i.e., Joachim's dale, in Bohemia, about the year 1518. A dollar is, therefore, merely a dale-er.

Good books are shields to the young. Temptations are blunted on them which otherwise would pierce to the quick. A man who draws sufficient pleasure from books is independent of the world for his pleasure. Friends may die; books never are sick; and they do not grow old. Riches melt away; books are in danger of no bankruptcy. Our companions have their own errands to execute and their own burdens to bear; and cannot, therefore be always at hand when we need company. But books need never go out from us. They are not sensitive to our neglect; they are never busy; they do not scold us, and they do welcome us with uniform genial delight.

WHEN A LOVER MAY SPEAK.—As a rule a delicate woman does not think of a man as a lover, or even know whether she would care for him in that capacity or not, until she has had some impression of his special interest in her. Then she begins to consider him. Does a long talk with him bore or delight her? Does she find herself talking to him freely, or entertaining him with an effort? Is the festive occasion from which he is absent robbed of some portion of its brightness? Does she "see his face all faces among," catch his voice, though a dozen are speaking? Then, unconsciously, do her cheeks begin to glow at his coming. In her eyes smiles a welcome; timid yet sweet; and the reverent, waiting lover may speak safely, for his hour has come.

REGATTAS.—Venice first introduced regattas to the world, and from thence they passed to England during the last century. The event is chronicled as producing a universal sensation. The entire bank of the Thames was crowded from London Bridge to Millbank, and even Westminster Hall was provided with a staging for spectators. Plans of the regatta were sold for prices ranging from a penny to one shilling each; songs on the occasion were hawked about, in some of which "regatta" was made to rhyme with "Ranelagh," and "royal family" with "liberty." In the account in question, the racing does not seem to have attained to any degree of importance in point of speed. "The wager boats started on the signal of the firing of a single piece of cannon, and were absent about fifty minutes."

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. B. X.—If a gentleman is engaged to a young lady he may address her by her Christian name when writing a letter to her. The terms of endearment must depend a great deal upon the intimacy existing between them.

NELLA.—If you are visiting at a friend's house by request, and they invite you to attend a place of amusement, it would not be proper for you to offer to pay your own expenses. You can return any such compliment or attention when they visit you.

S. M.—Take a walk before eating your breakfast. The length of time and distance covered should be gauged by your strength, as it is absolutely necessary that no fatigue should be experienced. After returning from the walk eat a good meal, and then rest yourself thoroughly.

L. B. S.—If the fact that you are going so far away to live does not bring the young gentleman to the point, nothing you can do is likely to have much effect. Do not let his fortune influence you very much. Fortunes made by young gentlemen abroad often turn out on examination to exist in the clouds.

SERMON B.—No respectable chemist would be likely to sell you so much pure arsenic without the authority of a medical man. There are numerous blood-purifiers of a harmless nature, and it would be very foolish to adopt the use of such a deadly poison unless under the direction of a skilled practitioner.

LENA.—Under the circumstances you mention the young lady would be called Miss Mary Jones, to distinguish her from her elder sister, whose proper designation would be Miss Jones. So, if the stranger were entitled to a reply to his question, the young lady should tell him that her name was Miss Mary Jones.

TOM S.—1. It is customary to give your card to the servant who opens the door and admits you to the house. It is not customary for ladies to turn the corner of a visiting-card. 2. A good address and a knowledge of accounts are most useful to ladies in business. 3. It is usual to pass sideways, and not to face those seated on either side.

E. G. F.—Cochineal, a dye-stuff used in dyeing scarlet and crimson, and in the preparation of the colours known as carmine and lake, consists simply of the bodies of the females of a species of insects which feeds upon plants of the cactus family, particularly on one designated the cochineal plant, but known in Mexico as the Nopal, from which the cultivators derive the name of *nopaleros*.

BARNET.—You had better not undertake the education of the young lady's flirting habits by letter. You will, in all human probability, have your trouble for your pains. Unless you have a genuine interest, and look upon the young lady as a possible helpmate, we would advise you gradually to drop the correspondence. It is certain to become sentimental sooner or later.

POLLY D.—1. The general charge of powder is two drachms for every ounce and one-quarter of shot. 2. The distance at which a person can kill a bird with such a charge depends entirely upon the gunner's accuracy of aim. 3. It is the generally received opinion that the cause of the scattering of shot depends upon the width of bore of the gun used; those of the largest size scattering more than others. 4. Your handwriting is very good.

R. C. A.—Presents are sent to the bride at her home, and are sent before the ceremony. Sometimes they are sent almost as soon as the invitation is received. It does not matter whether the invitation includes the breakfast at the house or is only extended to the ceremony at the church; the presents are sent to the bride's home, and she will not neglect to acknowledge the receipt of the same as soon as she has an opportunity to do so.

IGNORAMUS.—1. If a gentleman receives an invitation to attend a ball or party, and is unable owing to a previous engagement to accept, he should send a regret at once, and it is well to state the reason why he cannot attend. The following are the usual forms employed when writing an acceptance or a regret:—"Mr. and Mrs. Jones sincerely regret their inability to accept Mrs. Long's kind invitation for Wednesday evening, June 20th, 18-;" or, "Mr. and Mrs. Jones accept with pleasure Mrs. Long's kind invitation for Wednesday evening, June 20th, 18-."

GEORGE C.—To construct a cheap galvanic-battery, take a gallon stone jar, and place in it a sheet-iron cylinder; inside of this, put a porous cup (a porous flower-pot, with a cork fitted in the hole, might be made to answer the purpose). Inside the porous cup, place a piece of sheet copper. Use a solution of common salt next the zinc, and a solution of sulphate of copper, next the copper in the porous cup, if a strong current be desired. The liquids inside and outside the porous cup should stand at the same level. Dilute sulphuric acid (one part of acid to ten parts of water) makes a very constant, but weaker current.

L. J. F.—1. To imitate rosewood, boil half a pound of logwood in three pints of water until it is of a very dark red, when half an ounce of carbonate of potash should be added. While boiling hot, stain the wood with two or three coats, taking care that it is nearly dry between each. Then with a stiff, flat brush, such as is used by painters for graining, form streaks with a black stain made by boiling one pound of logwood in four quarts of water, to which a double handful of walnut-peel or shells is added; then boil it again, take out the chips, and add one pint of the best vinegar. This streaking, if carefully executed, will be very nearly the appearance

of dark rosewood. The black streaks may also be put in with a camel's-hair pencil, dipped in a solution of copperas and verdigris in a decoction of logwood. A handy brush for the purpose may be made by taking a flat brush, such as is used for varnishing. Cut the sharp points off, and make the edges irregular by cutting out a few hairs here and there, and a tool will be produced which will accurately imitate the grain. 2. In staining wood like ebony, take a solution of sulphate of iron, and wash the surface intended to be ebonyised with it two or three times. Let it dry, and apply two or three coats of a strong hot decoction of logwood. Wipe the wood, when it becomes dry, with a sponge and water, and polish with linseed oil.

LIZA.—1. No; it is extremely rude. A well-bred man removes a cigar from his mouth when even passing in the street a lady whom he knows; and in some countries it would be considered an actual insult to a lady to hold a lighted cigar in the hand while speaking to her. 2. Your writing is too faint and lacks decision, but with practice you will learn to write very well. 3. No absolute rule on the subject of invitations to call can be given. As a rule a young lady should not ask a gentleman to call on her, unless she has some reason for thinking that the gentleman desires to have the invitation.

MONO.—Rivers running towards the equator recede from the centre of the earth, because, owing to the shape of the earth, the ocean level at the equator is thirteen miles farther from the centre of the earth than it is at the poles. The elevation of the bed of the Mississippi, owing to this, is 32,423 feet, its descent in the course of 2,133 feet, leaving the mouth 21,330 feet, or a trifle over four miles farther from the earth's centre than its source. So, after all, in one sense, water does run up-hill. The strict definition of going up-hill, however, is moving against the force of gravity, and as no river does this we may still cling to our old belief that water will always run down hill.

THE LIGHT OF THE HOUSE.

The light of the house, and its music,
The joy of its morrow and noon,
The fragrance and balm of its even,
The dear and unspeakable boon!

I long for sweet lips on my forehead—
Alas! 'tis the fever instead;
I call the pet-name that I gave her,
And know I am calling the dead.

The light of the house, and its music—
Oh, God! when the birds first awake
In the grey and the chill of the morning,
I wonder my heart does not break—

Remembering all I have suffered,
Remembering all I have known,
And crying the angels to witness
I loved her, my lost one, my own!

L. M. C.

PENGROOK.—The manufacture of artificial teeth, and other matters comprehended in mechanical dentistry, involve many subjects of which no adequate idea can be conveyed by mere description. The various conditions of the mouth requiring the adaptation of artificial teeth range from cases where only one tooth may be wanting to those where not a single tooth remains in the jaw, above or below. According to the teeth that are spoken of as partial or complete sets, and it is plain that you need one of the former kind, the simplest form of which is known as a pivoted tooth.

ARTHUR.—Cultivate the acquaintance of the ladies whom you do know. Confide in the married ladies, not quite as frankly as you have in us, but still frankly. Tell them that you want to meet some nice girl; ask their advice and counsel, and you will secure their good offices as well. When you do meet young ladies, do not be discouraged if the first interviews are a little stiff and formal. Remember you are not the only bashful person in the world. When you are attracted to any particular young lady, try to make the acquaintance of her friends of both sexes, so as to become part of her circle, and be able to join in her pursuits and amusements. In this way you will be able to judge of her character and feelings, and recommend yourself to her.

TED.—The term distemper is applied to a coarse mode of painting, in which the colours of a commoner kind than those usually employed for artistic purposes are mixed in a watery glaze, such as size and whiting. The chief purposes for which distemper is now used are scene-painting and staining papers for walls. It is said that some of the old masters frequently executed portions of pictures in distemper, and then oiled them, by which means they acquired the character of being painted originally in oil. This mode of painting is not, as you suppose, identical with fresco. The difference is, that while in the former the colours are laid on a dry surface, in the latter they are put on wet mortar or plaster.

M. Y.—In silvering looking-glasses, a large, perfectly flat stone table is provided, upon which a sheet of tin-foil, without crack or flaw, is evenly spread. This is covered uniformly to the depth of one-eighth of an inch with clear mercury. The plate of glass, perfectly cleansed from all grease and impurity, is floated carefully on the mercury, so as to exclude all air-bubbles. It is then pressed down by loading it with weights, in order to squeeze out all the mercury which remains in a fluid state, this surplus being received in a gutter around the

stone. After remaining in this position for about twenty-four hours, it is raised gently upon its edge, and in a few weeks is ready to frame. It is said to be desirable to have the lower end of the glass from which the mercury was drained at the bottom of the frame, as the surface is generally roughened a little at that part. In silvering convex and concave mirrors, the amalgamated foil is applied by means of accurately-fitting plaster moulds. The interior of globes is silvered by introducing a liquid amalgam (consisting of a mixture of lead, tin, bismuth, and mercury), and turning about the globe until every part is covered with it.

ESSIE.—The young lady, according to your version of the affair, has treated you very shabbily; but she may have made some explanation of her conduct which you have not given, else why should she have treated you so well on the occasion of your last meeting? You say that both she and her parents are very poor, and we think it stands to reason that if she loved you so dearly, she would be content to become your wife, even though you were not rich. A salary of £200 per year should suffice to keep the "wolf from the door," and raise her to a higher condition than the one she now occupies, relieving her from the drudgery of a sewing-girl's life. Taking all these points into consideration, we cannot give a definite answer as to the lady's motives.

BEN BOLT.—1. The lady may, should she see fit, sue her husband for support of both herself and child. The amount awarded her will depend on what she may prove him to be capable of giving. 2. According to a recent ruling in court, the judge before whom a case is brought for decision as to the custody of a child may use his discretionary powers in the matter, according to the evidence, and allow either the mother or father to retain it or them. In the case cited by you, the mother may keep her child until he attains the age of seven years without molestation on the part of her husband (for such he is until she shall obtain a decree of divorce from him), after which, if he sees fit, he may bring the matter before the court. Should this occur, she will have to prove that the child is well taken care of, and is being brought up in an exemplary manner, in which case it is not at all likely the judge will change the boy's custodian.

ROBIN.—To effectually prevent the ravages of moths in furs and woollen clothing, thoroughly beat the articles with a thin rattan, stir them for several hours, and (in the case of furs) carefully comb them with a clean comb, wrap them up in newspapers, perfectly tight, and put away in an air-tight, tin-lined chest. They should be taken out, examined, beaten thoroughly, and placed in the sun at least once a month. In your case, the only sure remedy of which you are cognizant is to bake the furs in an oven at a temperature below that which would scorch them. You may get rid of the pests by exposing the furs to the sun, although it is a very hard matter when they have once obtained a lodgment. It is not the moth, but the maggots of the moth, that does the mischief, and heat is the only thing that will effectually kill them. The eggs are deposited in the early spring, and therefore you should put the furs and woollen articles away at that time in the manner described above, not using camphor, the printink-in on the newspapers being as distasteful to the moth, and not acting upon the colour of the articles as camphor is always sure to do.

D. F.—1. It is useless for us to give you the address of the actress referred to, as, when you receive the number containing this answer the lady will be, perhaps, some hundreds of miles away, fulfilling her professional engagements. By purchasing a copy of a theatrical paper you will be enabled to ascertain her whereabouts. 2. Your writing is hardly up to the average lacking the distinctness of letter-formation so essential in fine writing. In regard to composition, you have no reason to complain, as your letter evidences the fact that you are well acquainted with the rules of the art. 3. To become a successful actress it is absolutely necessary to be in the possession of an abundance of talent, and also a sufficient amount of money to pay for the many costly incidentals required in the life of an actor or actress. 4. The low condition of your spirits, or, as it is generally called, the "blues," may be caused by a slight attack of dyspepsia. If so, you should diet yourself, and take as much exercise as possible, thus giving a healthy tone to your system, and eventually dispelling all morbid thoughts.

THE LONDON READER, Post-free. Three-half-pence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS and VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of all booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 247, Now Ready, price Sixpence; post-free, Eightpence. Also Vol. XXXIX, bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF "THE LONDON READER," 334, Strand, W.C.

We cannot undertake to return rejected Manuscripts.

London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. R. SPECK; and Printed by WOODFALL and KNOKE, Milford Lane, Strand.

